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60th Anniversary Special Issue

D-Day Stripes

Keg Carrying Spitfire

Carolyn Grace's ML407

D-Day Heavy Metal

8 Pages Colour Profiles

Volume 3 Issue 6 June 2004 £2.95

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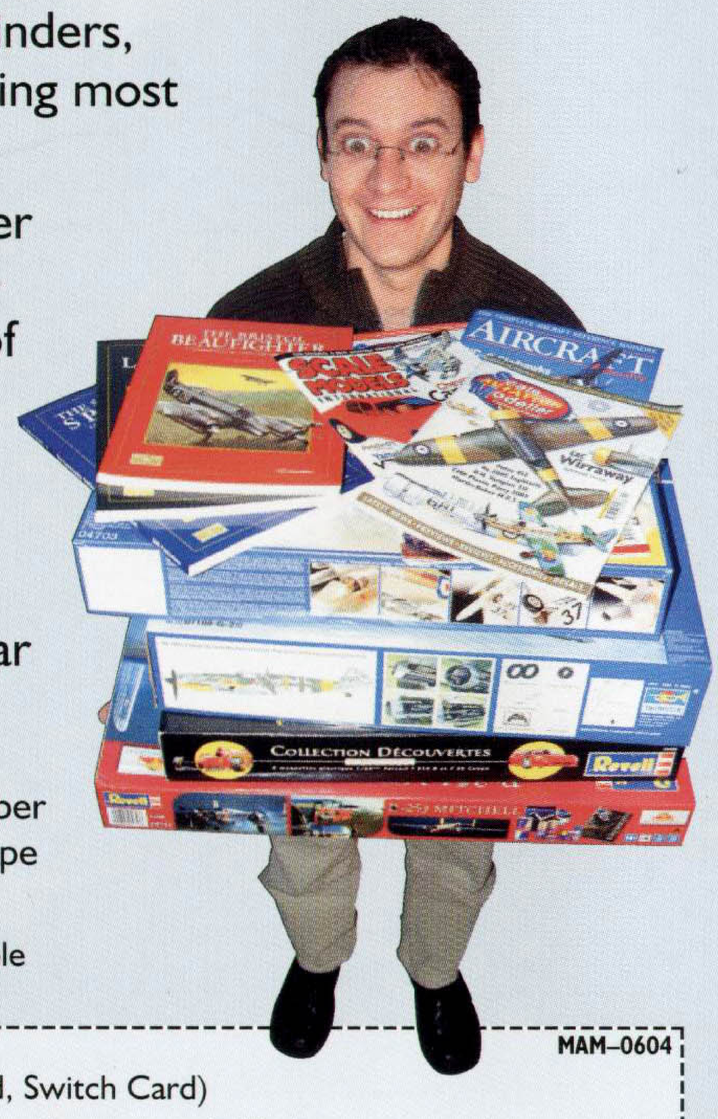
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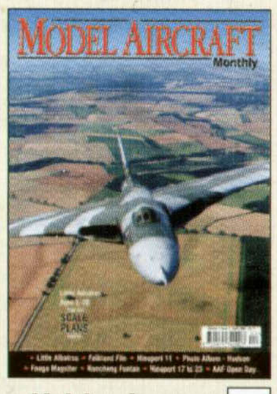
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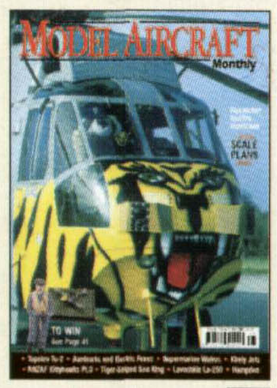
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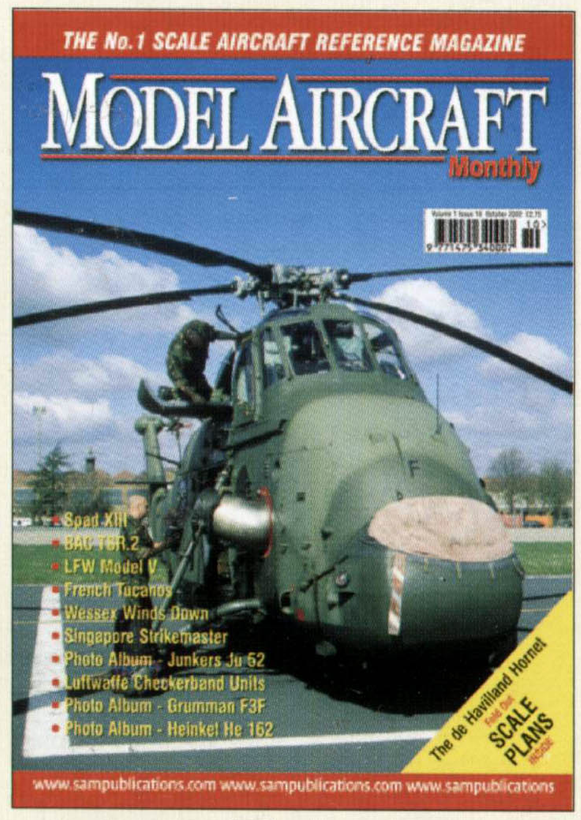
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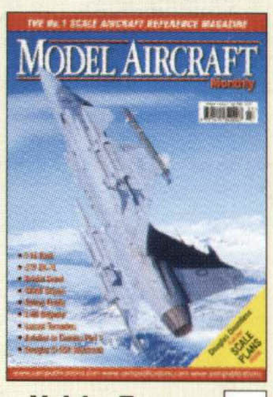
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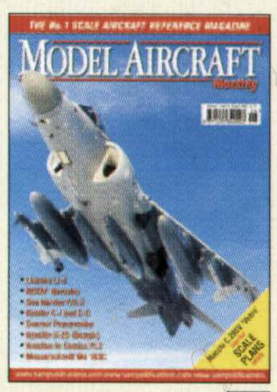
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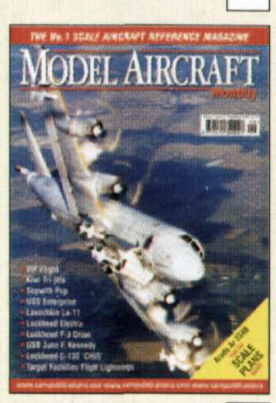
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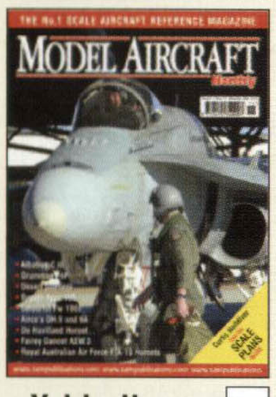
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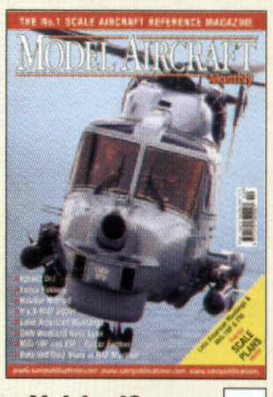
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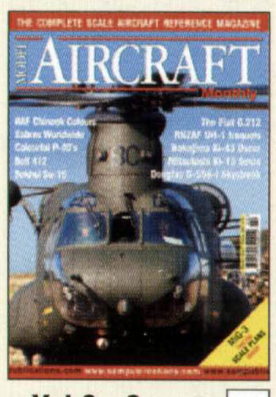
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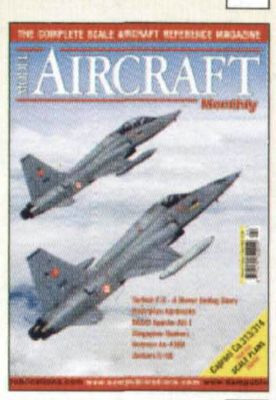
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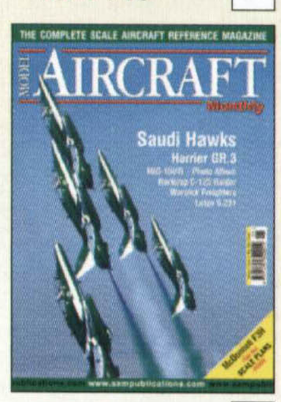
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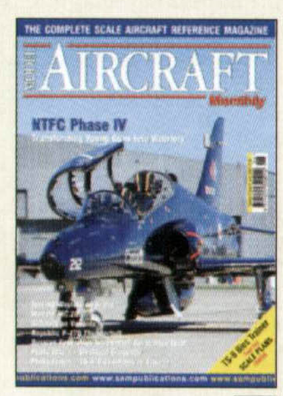
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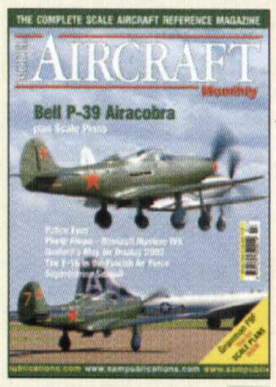
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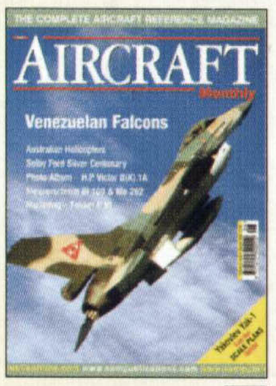
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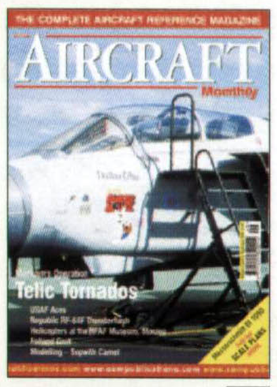
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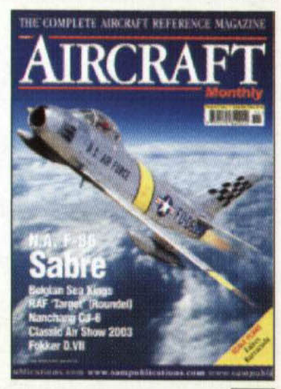
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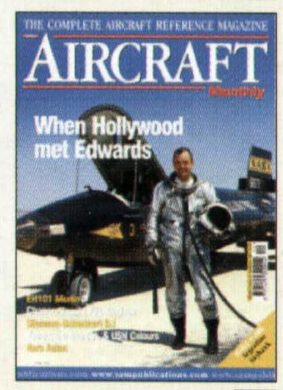
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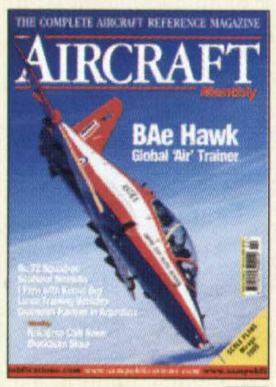
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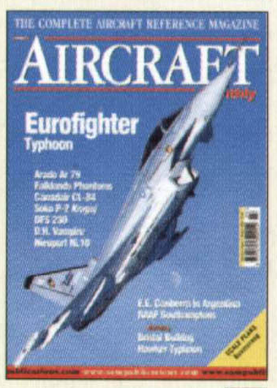
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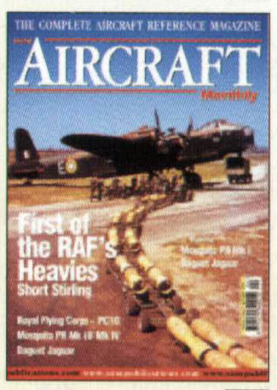
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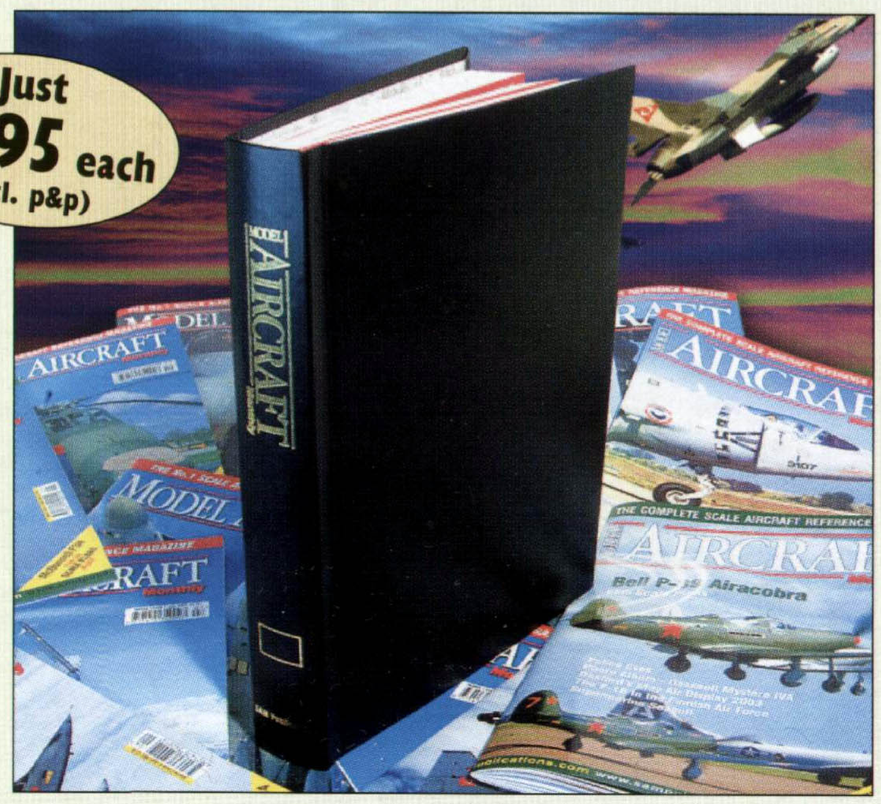
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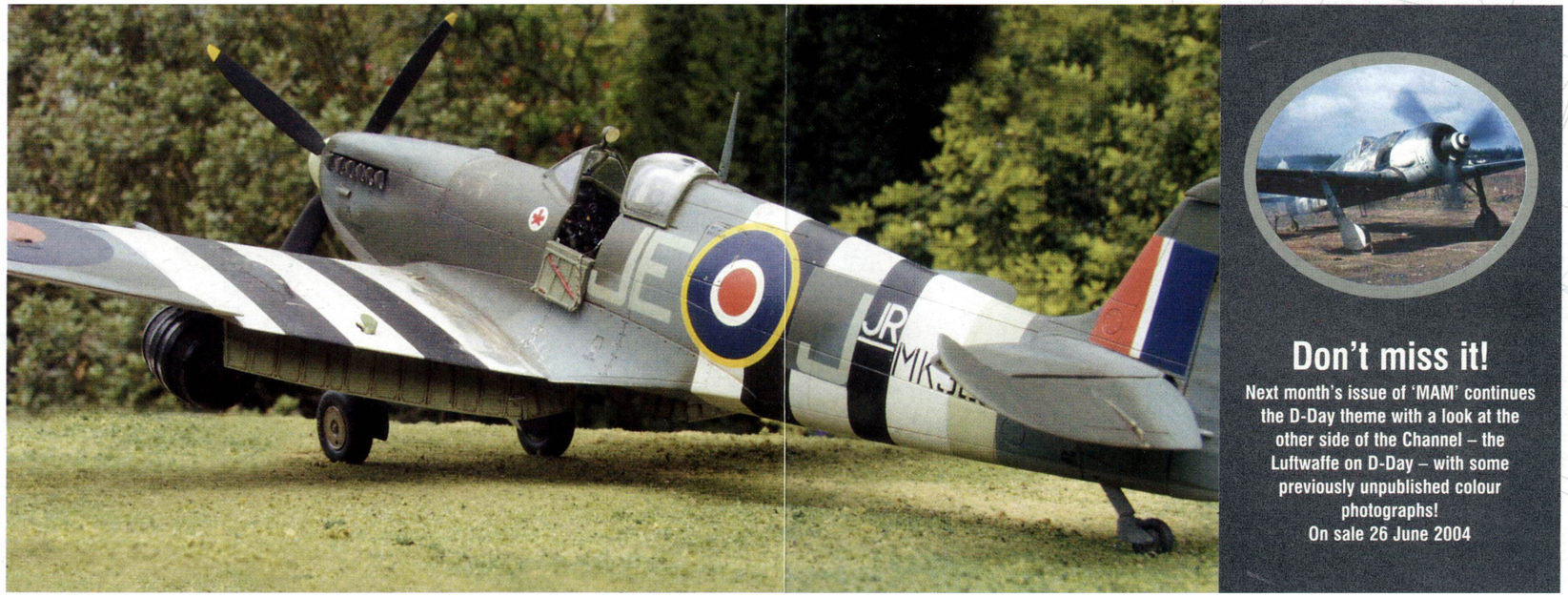
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Next issue will be 26th June 2004.



Don't miss it!

Next month's issue of 'MAM' continues the D-Day theme with a look at the other side of the Channel – the Luftwaffe on D-Day – with some previously unpublished colour photographs!
On sale 26 June 2004

editorial

The vanishing World War Two anniversaries

THIS PARTICULAR JUNE ISSUE OF *'MAM'* just *had* to devote a good percentage of its pages to the 60th Anniversary of D-Day! It will probably be the last time we do cover it as a commemorative feature, as '60th Anniversaries' seem to be the 'cut-off' point for most World War Two milestones. For instance, the May and August issues of *'MAM'* next year, will probably see the end of major 'anniversary' coverage of the War in Europe and the War in the Pacific.

Anniversaries are a very good 'peg' to 'hang' articles on, as they offer some excellent historical research and modelling opportunities. World War Two in general is still a 'popular era' amongst modellers and aviation enthusiasts alike, and I cannot see its popularity diminishing in the near future. However, there are still so many things about World War Two that we do not fully know about or understand, and as the people who were actually there and did them are now 'leaving us' in ever increasing numbers, it is almost a race against time to ensure their knowledge doesn't 'leave' with them!

I am in the privileged position of being able to print the fascinating findings of the few dedicated researchers still around today who specialise in World War Two subjects. I know how frustrating it can be when essential files at the Public Record Office (now the National Archive), are missing or photographs at the Imperial War Museum are cropped at the very place it would have revealed that elusive detail or serial number!

There are still some revelations about certain wartime colour schemes and/or specialised markings waiting to be unearthed, and, (almost as frustrating for the dedicated researcher), accepted by a suspicious and doubting aviation public. For instance, how many of us knew that back in 1944, the black and white D-Day stripes were officially called 'distinctive markings' and not invasion stripes?

I don't know how future generations will view World War Two, as time alters all sorts of perceptions of historical events, but my editorial remit has always been to provide and maintain a strong historical content, and to this end, you may rest assured, (the lack of 'significant' anniversaries notwithstanding of course!), good quality and interesting research and modelling articles covering the World War Two era will always find a welcome home in *'Model Aircraft Monthly'*. AM

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On the subject of significant events, a modelling milestone was passed on Saturday 8 May 2004, when 'E D Models', modelling emporium, closed its doors for the last time! 'E D Models' has been a modelling institution, in the UK and all over the world, for almost 30 years; initially at Netherfield near Birmingham, and then for most of its trading life at Stratford Road, Shirley, in the West Midlands.

A family run, 'proper model shop', Ed and Eileen Deeley who started it all, retired some years ago, but the good work was successfully carried on by their son Andrew. 'Young' Andrew, as he was always known, is now 40, and has decided upon a change of profession which will allow him more time for his family and his new bride, Brigitte.

On behalf of the entire modelling community, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Deeley family for providing such a warm and hospitable environment *in which it was a pleasure to part with our money*, and to wish Andrew and Brigitte, all the very best for their future together.

Neil Robinson
Editor, *'Model Aircraft Monthly'*

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Cover – Spitfire LF IX
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The Plane Picture Company
'Currently operated by the Dutch Spitfire Flight this is a true combat veteran. MK732 wears it's full D-Day battle dress exactly as it did on June 6th 1944 with N° 485 Sqn RNZAF when Flt Lt K J Macdonald shared in the victory of a Ju 88 over the beachhead.'

regulars

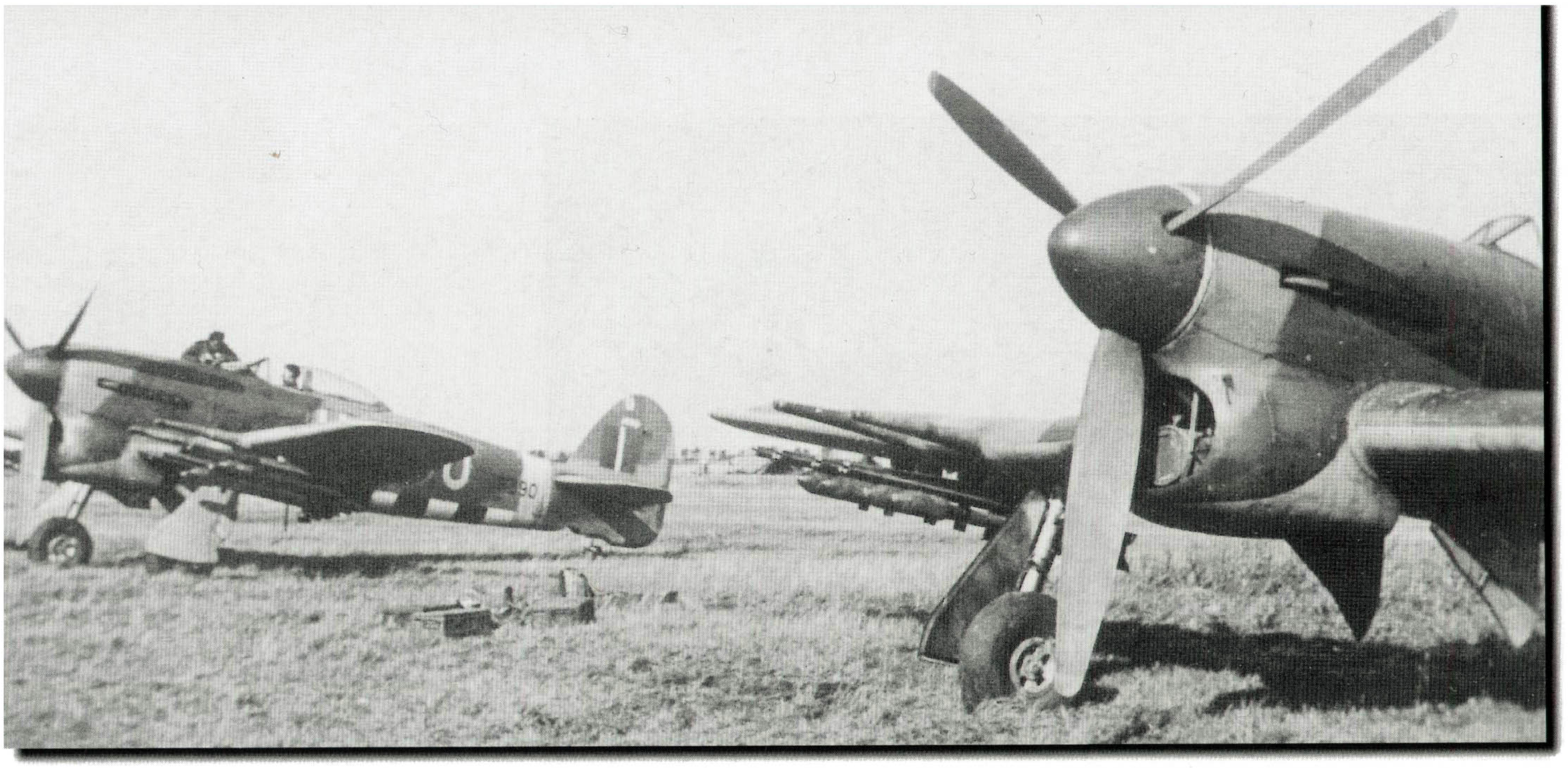
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D-Day Stripes

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SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on all other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe and security for ourselves in a free world...

THUS BEGAN THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE Allied Supreme Commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower, on the eve of 'Operation Neptune', the Allied landings in Normandy of 6 June 1944, which was the opening phase of 'Operation Overlord', the plan to defeat the German armed forces in the West.

Allied plans for the invasion of Europe can possibly be said to have had their genesis in Britain shortly after the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk. The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, directed that planning should be started in the summer of 1940 and, as the war situation changed with the entry into the conflict of the Soviet Union in June and the United States of American in December, 1941, such plans began to appear increasingly feasible.

However, even though Britain now had allies, the vicissitudes of war and the demands of other Theatres of Operation prevented any concrete steps from being taken until the Cassablanca Conference in 1943. It was decided to set up an Allied Staff to plan an invasion of Europe under a 'Chief-of-Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander', known by the acronym 'COSSAC' with a British Officer Lieutenant General F E Morgan being appointed to this post in March 1943.

COSSAC was allotted three tasks within the framework of Allied intentions to defeat the German military forces in Northwest Europe:

1) To make the enemy think that the Allies were going to launch a cross channel invasion in 1943.
2) To plan for an invasion using whatever forces were available at the time should the enemy present the Allies with a suitable opportunity.
3) To prepare for the a real full scale assault on the Continent with a target date of May 1944.

ABOVE Epitomising the D-Day period, a pair of rocket-armed Typhoons on an Advanced Landing Ground, "somewhere in Normandy", in the summer of 1944, probably late July/early August judging by the removal of the black and white 'distinctive markings' from the the upper surfaces of the wings and fuselage. The aircraft furthest from the camera is JR390, HF•U of No 183 Sqn. Note what appears to be a red propeller spinner and the individual aircraft letter and the serial number repeated, (in white?), above the fin flash. (via Chris Thomas. Note all the photographs used in this feature are from the files of Andy Thomas with their original source duly credited)

OPPOSITE TOP Mustang Mk I, AG645, RZ•W of No 241(Army Co operation) Squadron, with what appears to be a fairly narrow yellow chordwise band above, (and presumably below), the wing **MIDDLE** Typhoon Mk Ib, R8224, US•H of No 56 Squadron, with the short-lived white nose and spinner marking, introduced on 19 November 1942, so disliked by the pilots. Note the underwing black identification bands, introduced in early December, which have been amended to include the addition of white in the 'spaces' **BOTTOM** Typhoon Mk Ib, with the underwing black and white identification bands introduced on 5 December 1942 shown to good effect. Initially, just the four 12 inch wide black bands were applied, 24 inches apart, but by these 'spaces' were 'filled in' from 19 December, to improve visibility

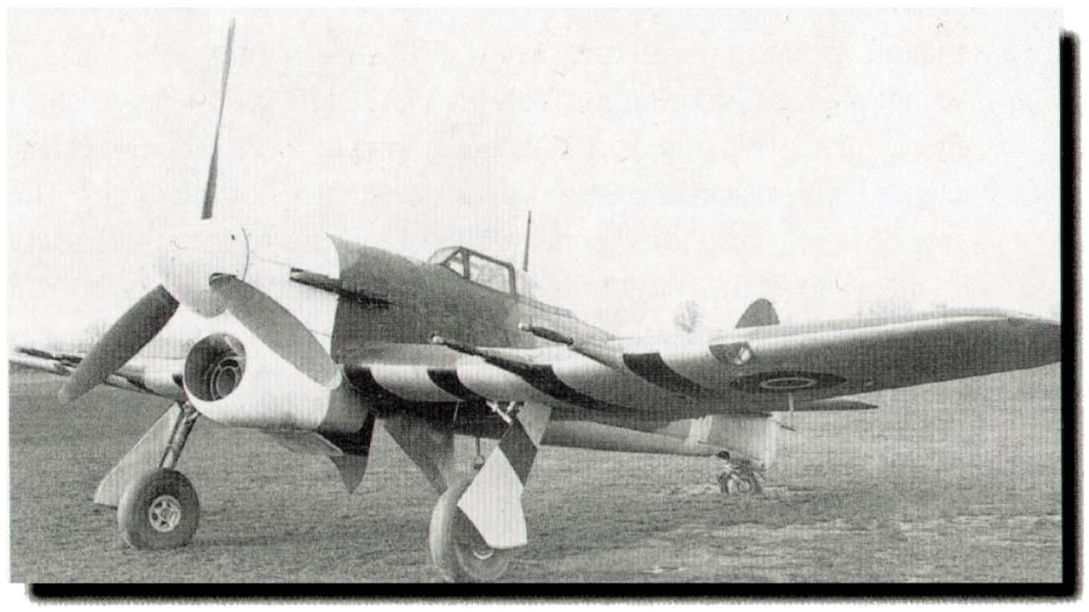


Identifying Allied aircraft

The degree of planning that this entailed was simply immense, and the question as to how large numbers of Allied aircraft, flown by crews of many nationalities, could be made readily identifiable to all the land, sea and air forces, again consisting of many nationalities engaged in the assault, was just one of a great many which needed to be addressed.

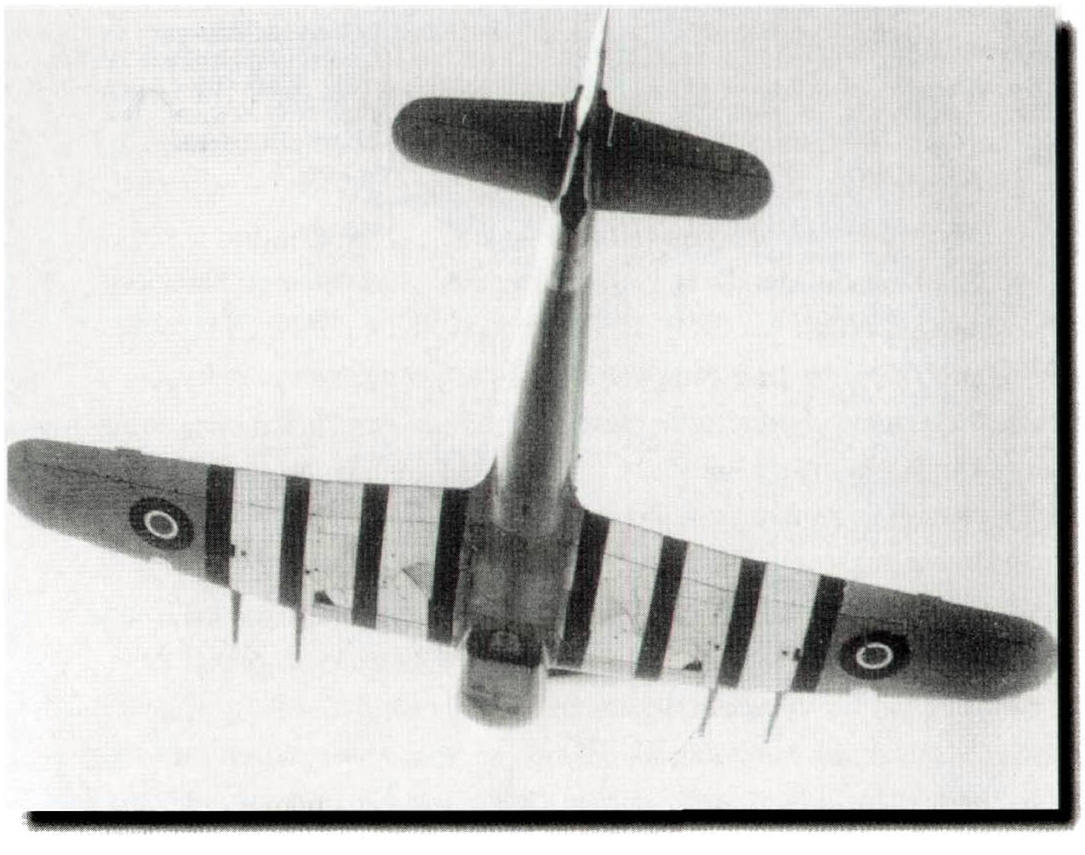
Since the birth of military aviation in the early years of the 20th Century, the need to positively identify the nationality of an aircraft in the air has given rise to the adoption of national markings by all nations. In addition to these markings, at various times extra distinctive markings have been found necessary to provide quick and unambiguous identification at a distance. This was particularly true during the Second World War and perhaps the best known marking of this kind is the three white and two black stripes adopted by Allied aircraft for 'Operation Neptune' followed by the first seven months of 'Operation Overlord'.

The idea of applying a black and white distinctive marking of some kind or coloured stripes to provide quick and unambiguous identification at a distance was not new in 1944. At the beginning of the World War Two, British fighter aircraft were finished with half black and half white under surfaces to enable them to be identified and tracked from the ground by the Observer Corps. Once it became possible to track the aircraft electronically the distinctive half black and half white scheme was removed, only for the black port underwing marking to be reintroduced in December 1940 along with a Sky tail band and spinner marking.



Although the black port underwing marking was removed again in April 1941, the Sky tail band and spinner markings continued in use, joined in the summer of 1941 by a yellow leading edge stripe applied to the outboard section of the wings to facilitate head-on identification.

During 1942, some new distinctive markings were tried out. The first of these was a yellow stripe which was applied to the upper surfaces of the RAF's Army Co-operation Mustangs in an attempt to prevent them from being misidentified as Bf 109s. This was deemed successful and the marking was retained for some time. However, a large scale experiment which was carried out in 11 Group for a week or so in the summer of 1942, which involved the application of white stripes around the nose and tailplanes of its fighter aircraft, was evidently not considered to be successful as the markings were subsequently not adopted.



Distinctive markings for the Typhoon

As far as is known at present, the first use of black and white stripes as an identification marking also dates from 1942. When the Hawker Typhoon first became operational during 1942, it was found that from some angles it bore a superficial resemblance to the Fw 190, which led to problems with correct identification.

The first attempt at solving this problem in July 1942 was to paint a 12 inch wide yellow chordwise band on the upper surface of the wing in a similar manner to the Army Co-operation Mustangs. Some Typhoons are reported as having had two bands although one band was the norm. A further step, taken in November 1942, was to paint



the noses of No 56 Squadron's Typhoons white. Whilst this was successful as a distinctive marking, it was disliked by squadron pilots who felt it made the aircraft too visible!

Therefore, on 5 December 1942, Fighter Command issued orders that the Typhoon was to carry a new distinctive marking. AMO A.1377 - 'Camouflage Colouring and Marking of Aircraft', promulgated on 24 December 1942, stated that Typhoon aircraft were to be specially marked with black stripes on the under surfaces of the wings. The stripes were to run fore and aft and be 12 inches wide at intervals of 24 inches from the root of the wing to the inboard end of the aileron with the first black stripe situated at the wing root. The spaces between the black stripes on the under surfaces of the wings were to be painted white but from the outboard edge of the outer black stripes to the wingtips the rest of the wing was to remain in Medium Sea Grey. The AMO made no mention of the Yellow upperwing stripe and it is thought that this fell from use, both on Mustangs and Typhoons during 1943.

The use of the black and white stripes as a distinctive marking on Typhoons must have been considered to be successful as a similar





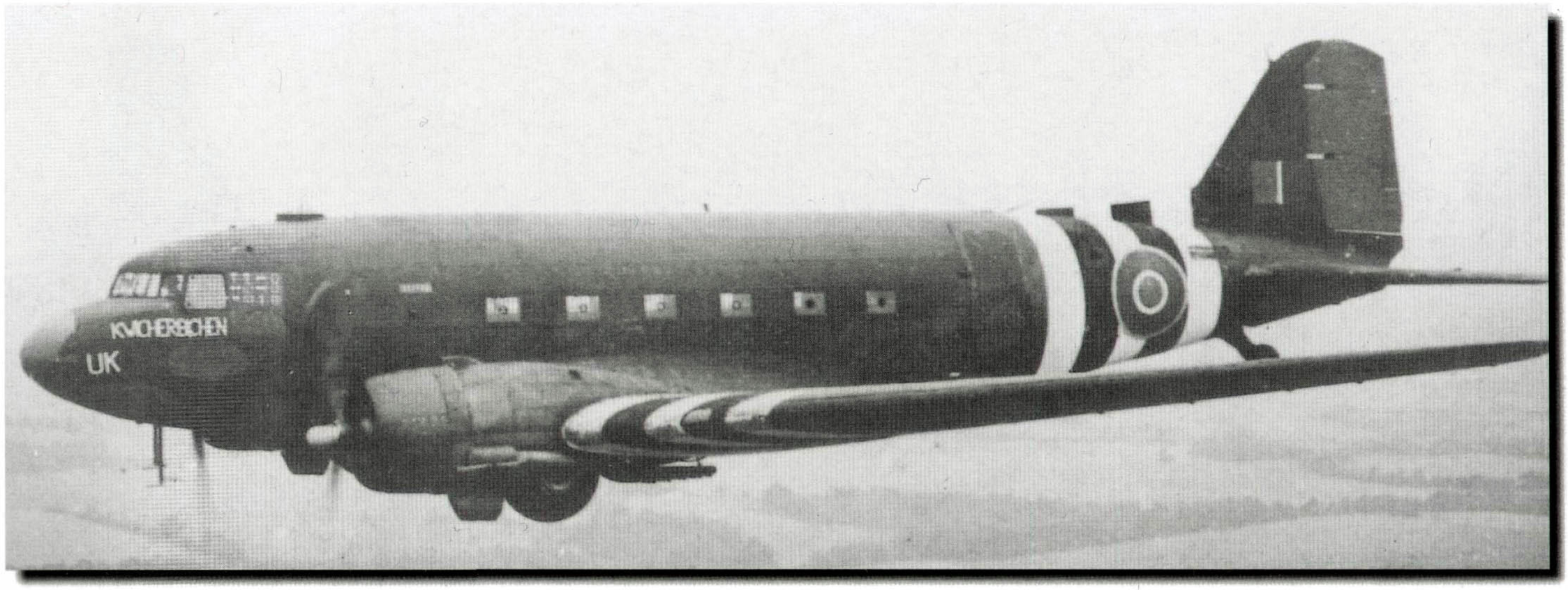
marking was chosen for application to aircraft participating in 'Operation Starkey' which took place in 1943.

'Operation Starkey'

'Operation Starkey' was just one part of an elaborate deception extending over the whole summer of 1943, which stemmed from COSSAC's brief to make the enemy think that the Allies were going to launch a cross channel invasion in 1943, whilst at the same time preparing an invasion using whatever forces were available at the time should the enemy present the Allies with a suitable opportunity.

'Operation Starkey' itself was the name given to an ambitious feint to draw the Luftwaffe into battle by threatening an imminent large scale landing in the Pas-de-Calais and RAF aircraft taking part in this operation were finished in distinctive markings to facilitate identification. These markings took the form of two white and three black bands on both surfaces of the wings with the outermost band appearing to be wider than the rest and covering the whole wingtip. The application of these markings would appear to have necessitated the overpainting of the national markings both above and below the wing. In addition to these markings which were applied to both single- and twin-engined aircraft, twin-engined aircraft were also marked with white noses. No stripes were applied to the rear fuse-

ABOVE TOP Typhoon Mk Ib, EK183, US•A of No 56 Squadron, with a 12 inch wide, yellow chordwise band, introduced in September 1942, just visible on the upper surface of the wing. Note that the aircraft also has the under surface black and white identification bands. (via IWM) **MIDDLE** Typhoon Mk Ib, R8224, US•H of No 56 Squadron, with the short-lived white nose and spinner marking, introduced on 19 November 1942, so disliked by the pilots. Note the underwing black identification bands, introduced in early December, which have been amended to include the addition of white in the 'spaces'
BOTTOM Typhoon Mk Ib, with the underwing black and white identification bands introduced on 5 December 1942 shown to good effect. Initially, just the four 12 inch wide black bands were applied, 24 inches apart, but by these 'spaces' were 'filled in' from 19 December, to improve visibility
OPPOSITE TOP One of the stalwarts of the D-Day landings, was the C-47/Dakota, operated in large numbers by both the USAAF and the RAF. Here, Dakota Mk III, FZ692 of No 233 Sqn., is shown in full 'distinctive markings' after being used to tow Horsa gliders and drop paratroops on D-Day. The Squadron codes, (5T), and individual aircraft letter appear to have been painted-out, but note the names 'KWICHERBICHEN' and 'UK' on the nose and the tally of sorties to the rear of the cockpit window. (via RAF Museum) **MIDDLE** Rocket-armed Typhoons of No 174 Sqn., taking off from B2, an Advanced Landing Ground near Bazenville in France, in early July 1944, still sporting full 'invasion stripes'. (via Chris Thomas) **BOTTOM** Tactical Reconnaissance Mustang Mk I, of No 168 Sqn., whose serial number is annoyingly hidden by the shadow under the tailplane, on an Advanced Landing Ground, "somewhere in Normandy", mid-July 1944. (via P H T Green)



lages of either type of aircraft.

Following the completion of 'Operation Starkey', the temporary black and white markings were removed from the aircraft, although the black and white distinctive markings remained in use on Typhoons and were also initially applied to the first Tempest Mk Vs to enter RAF service.

These distinctive black and white underwing markings which were applied to the Typhoon and Tempest remained in use until early 1944 when Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Air Forces, (HQ AEAF), requested permission from the Air Ministry to remove them. On 1 February 1944, it was agreed that the markings were to no longer be carried by Typhoons from first light on 7 February 1944. By this stage, the black and white markings were being applied by the manufacturers on the production line as evidenced by Gloster's confirmation that they would cease to apply such markings to production Typhoons by 6 February 1944. From 14 February 1944, Tempests were also to cease carrying the markings although as late as April 1944, Tempests were still being delivered with black and white stripes under the mainplanes.

Mustang markings

At the same time that the black and white markings were being removed from the Typhoon and Tempest, the RAF's Mustang Mk IIIs were the subject of some concern with regard to identification within the AEAF.

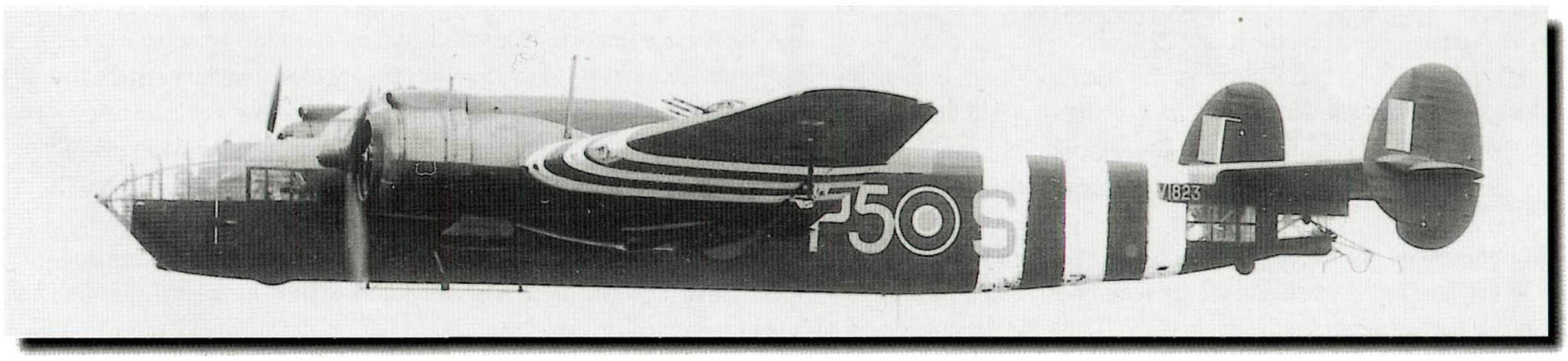
On 2 February 1944, HQ AEAF wrote to the Air Ministry seeking approval to apply markings to its Mustang Mk IIIs similar to those used by the USAAF. The reason for this request was that it was felt that the operation of the Mustang III squadrons of 2 TAF in close proximity to US Fighter aircraft, especially as escorts to Day Bombers, made the use of similar recognition markings to the Americans particularly important.

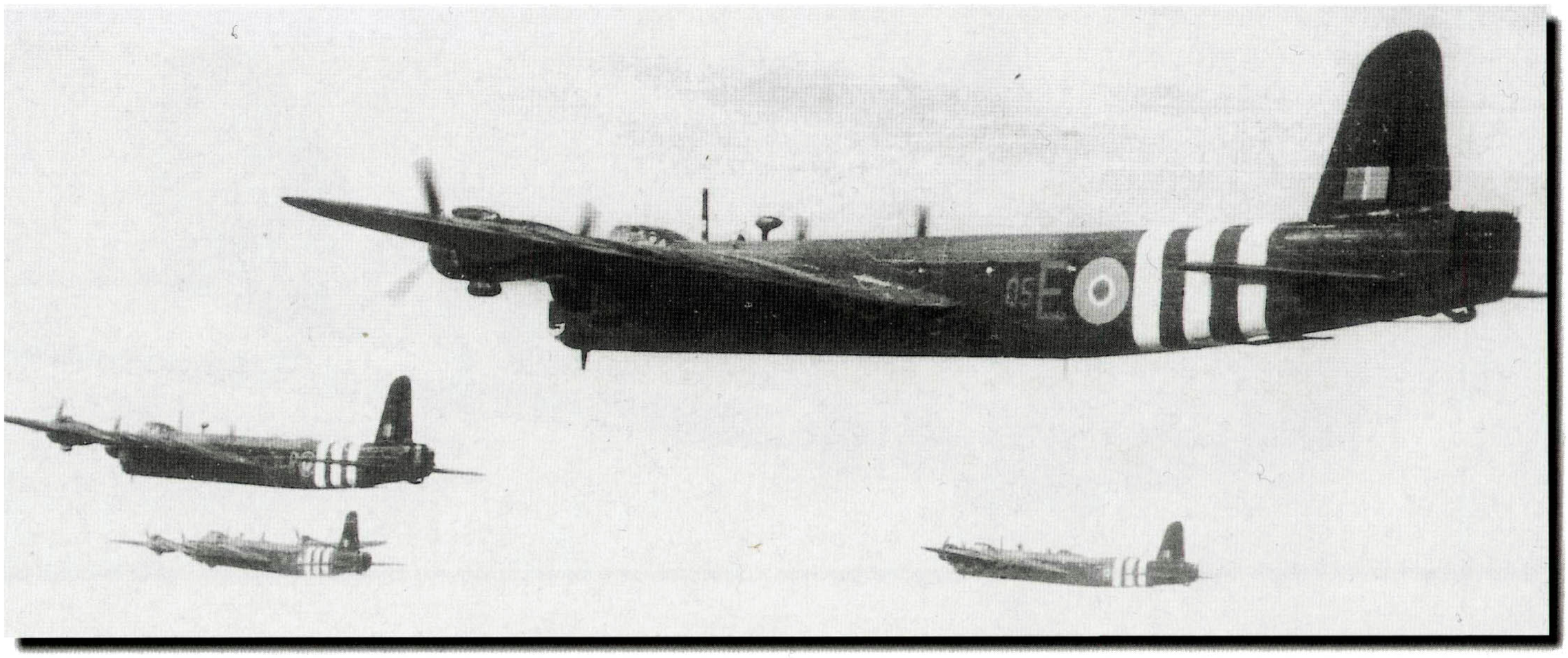
The markings which HQ AEAF wished to adopt consisted of a white spinner; a 12 inch wide white band on both surfaces of the fin and rudder 18 inches below the top of the fin; a 15 inch wide white band on the top and bottom of each tailplane 33 inches from the tip; a 15 inch wide white band on top and bottom of each mainplane with its innermost edge approximately 15 feet from the wingtips and finally, a 12 inch wide white band around the engine cowling adjacent to the spinner. The bands around the wings, and tail surfaces were all to be parallel to the longitudinal axis of the aircraft.

The Air Ministry replied to HQ AEAF on 15 February 1944 approving the adoption of these markings but at the same time raising the question as to whether Mustangs employed on reconnaissance or close support duties should also be similarly marked. The Air Ministry felt that when the new Mustang III markings became well known, the possibility existed that if RAF Mustangs with and without such markings were operating close to one another in conditions of poor visibility, then recognition of Mustangs without the markings might be in doubt, especially in view of the close resemblance of the Mustang to the Me 109, which had led the Americans to adopt the markings in the first place.

The Air Ministry also asked that HQ AEAF consider that the applications of such special markings compromised the camouflage finish of the aircraft, the reason cited for the recent removal of such markings from the Typhoon and Tempest. It was suggested that this prob-







lem might be minimised by the removal of such markings from the under surfaces.

With permission granted, HQ AEAF seems to have wasted little time in getting the markings applied to both the upper and under surfaces of its Mustang IIIs, as on 16 February 1944, it sent a Postagram to the Air Ministry detailing the markings which were being applied to its Mustang IIIs and asking that the change in markings be promulgated to all concerned and the defences warned.

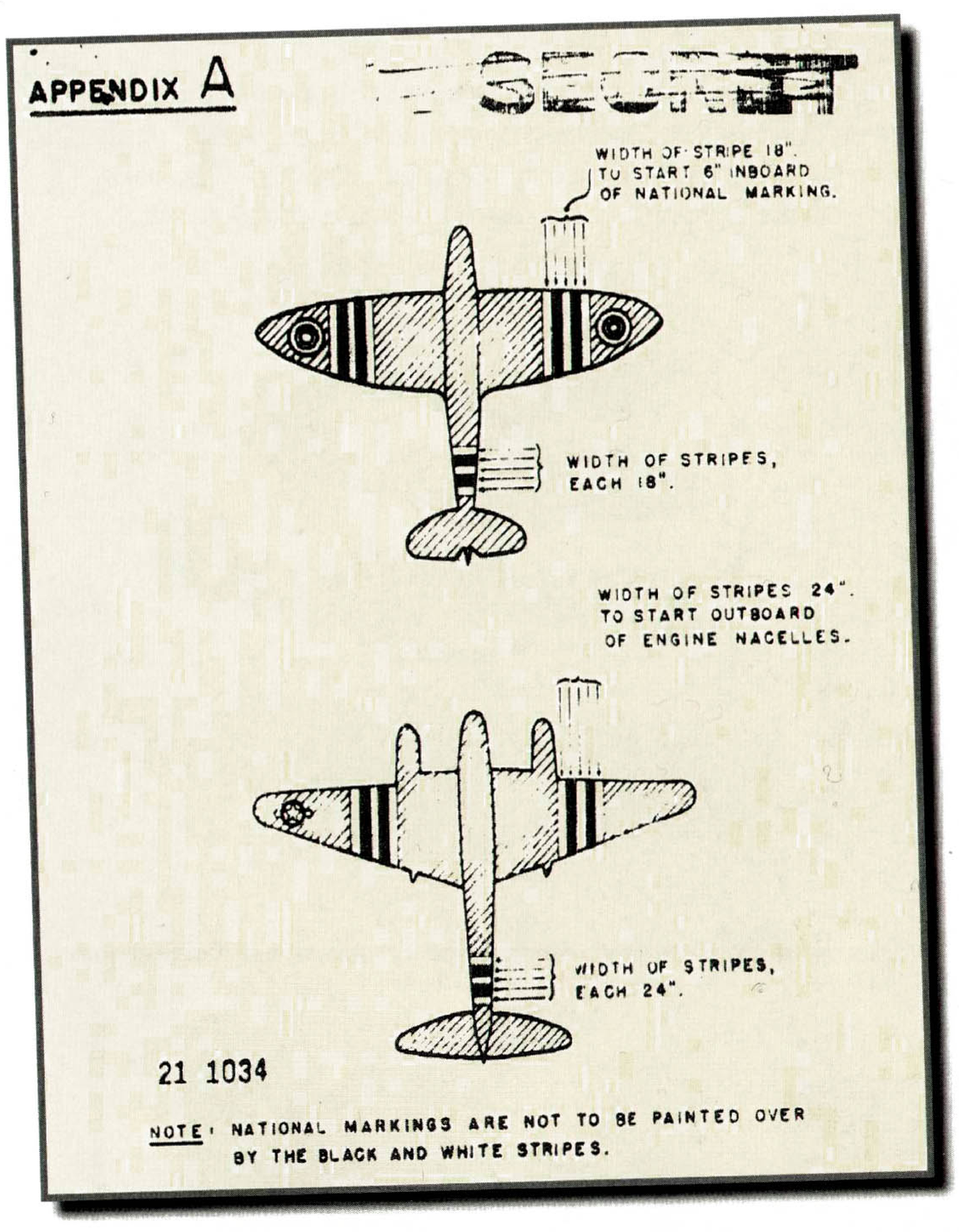
Two days later, on 18 February 1944, HQ AEAF wrote to the Air Ministry to inform them that the points raised by the Air Ministry in their letter of 15 February, with regard to the application of similar distinctive markings to the Mustang Mk Is used for reconnaissance and close support, had been considered. HQ AEAF felt that as these aircraft were engaged on offensive reconnaissance operations which took them deep into enemy territory, they depended upon their camouflage a great deal for survival and that consequently, it was not proposed to adopt the distinctive markings for these aircraft. Whilst the danger of operating the two dissimilarly marked types of Mustang in close proximity was realised, it was thought that this would not be a problem as both types of Mustang would be equally affected by the decision as to what type of distinctive marking would be applied to all aircraft for the then pending operations on the Continent during and after the invasion. The Air Ministry therefore notified all concerned of the new distinctive markings being applied to the RAF's Mustang Mk IIIs in Telegram A.115 on 21 February 1944.

Towards the end of March 1944, the USAAF ordered that its Mustangs were to cease to carry the stripe on the fin and rudder. Photographic evidence would appear to indicate that RAF Mustangs followed suit, also apparently removing the stripes from the tailplane.

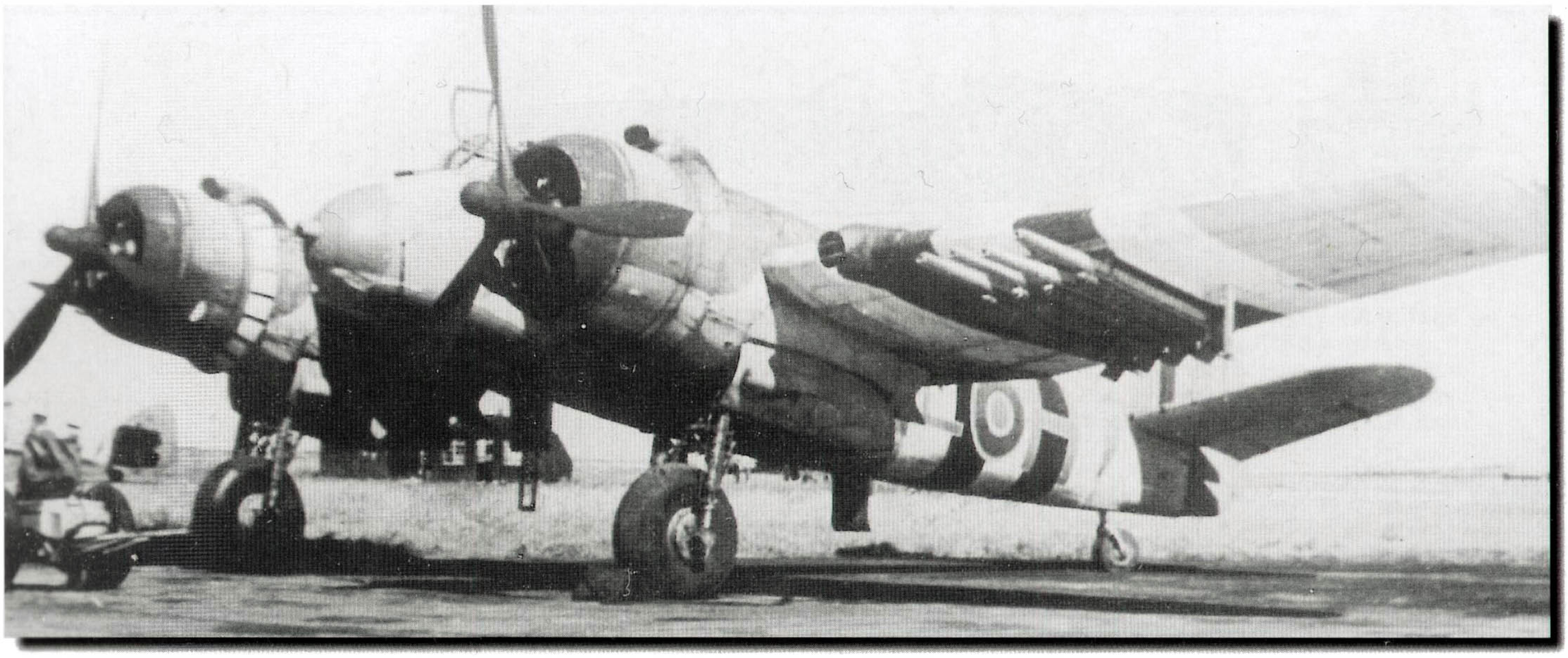
As might be inferred from the above, during February 1944 no decision appears to have yet been made as to what form the distinctive markings which would be applied for the assault on Europe had been made. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, it has still not proved possible to locate any documents which might throw any light on the decision-making process which led to the selection of the three white and two black stripe design which was to be applied to the wings and fuselage of participating aircraft prior to the issue of SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, on 18 April 1944.

At the moment, it is thought likely that the precedent set by the longstanding use of black and white as highly contrasting colours used in distinctive identification markings leading to corporate familiarity of the concept within Allied forces, played some part in the selection of the black and white markings which are nowadays colloquially known as 'invasion stripes', but were only ever officially described as 'distinctive markings' in official documentation during World War Two.

The use of black and white stripes as an identification marking the previous year for 'Operation Starkey' may also have been a factor in the decision. It is however known that the implementation of the aircraft markings was one of the subjects discussed at least three meetings at HQ AEAF and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, (SHAEF), on 20 April, 27 April and 18 May 1944.



TOP A formation of Short Stirling Mk IVs of No 620 Squadron, with 'distinctive markings' around the rear fuselages only. The aircraft in the foreground appears to be coded OS•E, but the serial number is obscured by the tailplane. (via P H T Green) **ABOVE** Appendix A from SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, showing thr size and location of the Distinctive Markings on single- and twin-engined aircraft



SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23

As has already been stated, the distinctive markings which were to be applied for 'Operation Neptune' were laid down in SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, 'Distinctive Marking - Aircraft', which was issued on 18 April 1944. The stated object of this Memorandum was to prescribe the distinctive markings which were to be applied to American and British aircraft in order to make them more readily identifiable as being 'friendly' by Allied ground, sea and air forces.

The instructions contained in SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, were to apply to the following types of British and American aircraft:

1) Fighters and Fighter-Bombers
2) Tactical and Photographic Reconnaissance aircraft
3) Aircraft employed in spotting for Naval and Field Artillery
4) Light Bombers
5) Medium Bombers
6) Troop carrier aircraft, including four engine types
7) Glider Tugs, including four engine types
8) Liaison aircraft and Air Observation Platforms employed in forward areas for fire spotting and adjustment or for advanced aircraft control
9) Coastal Command, Air Sea Rescue and disembarked Fleet Air Arm aircraft except for seaplanes and four engine aircraft which need not be marked.

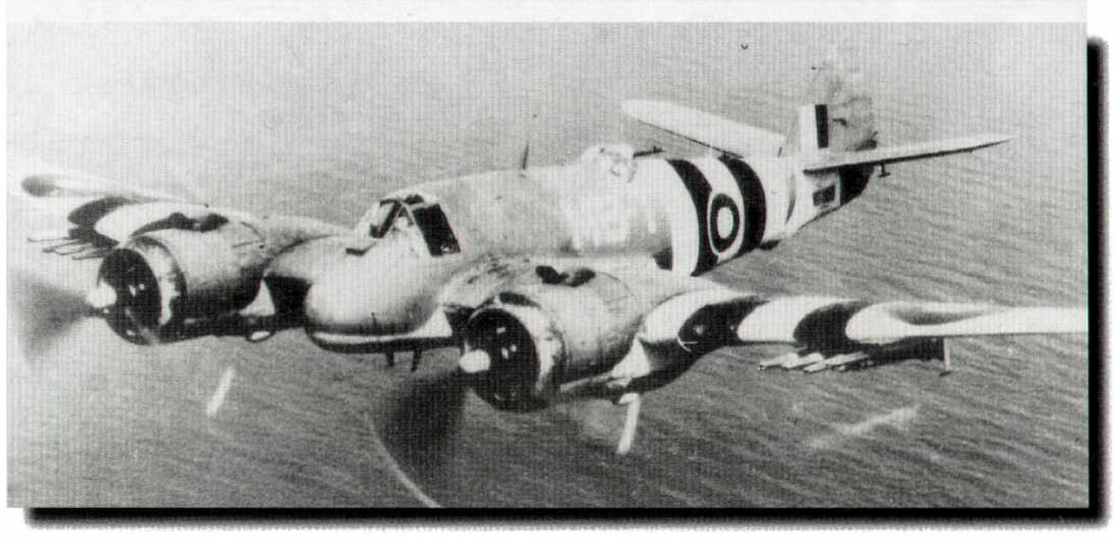
The instructions would not however apply to the following types of aircraft:

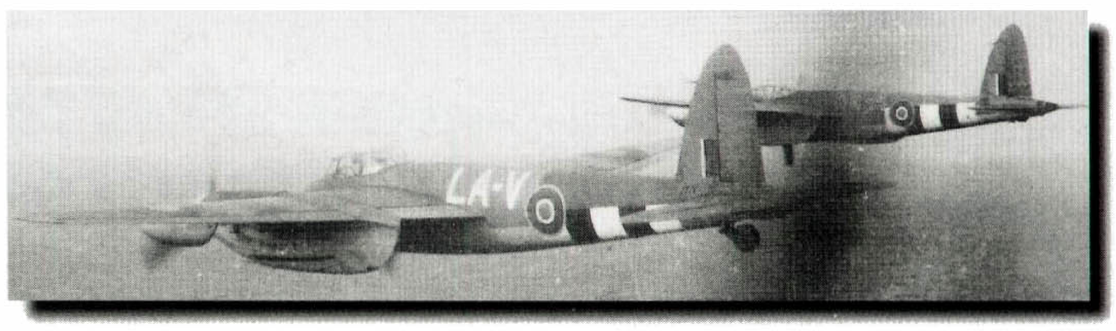
1) Four-engine bombers
2) Air transports
3) Gliders
4) Night Fighters
5) Seaplanes

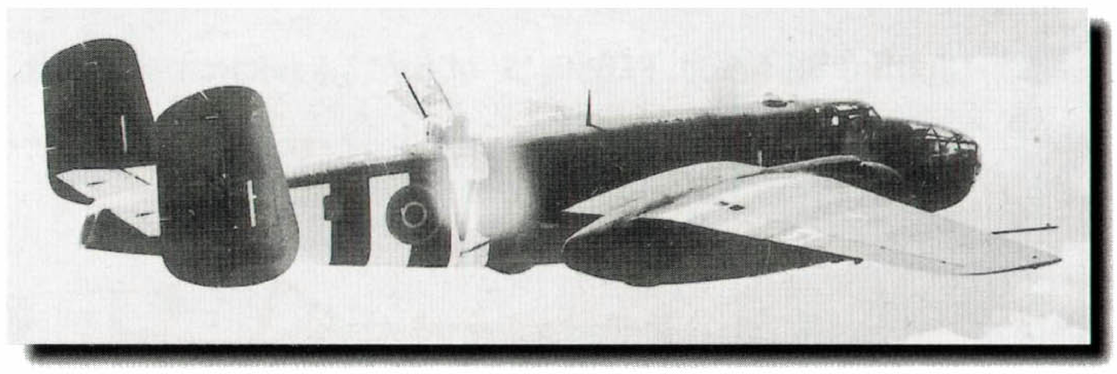
The instructions given in the memo were to become effective on the day of the assault and thereafter until such time as it was deemed advisable to change. Aircraft were to be given their distinctive markings as shortly before the day of the assault as was possible in order to protect the effectiveness of their use.

The instructions to apply the distinctive markings were not intended to change the national markings then in use by either British aircraft in the form of Red, White, Blue and Yellow roundels

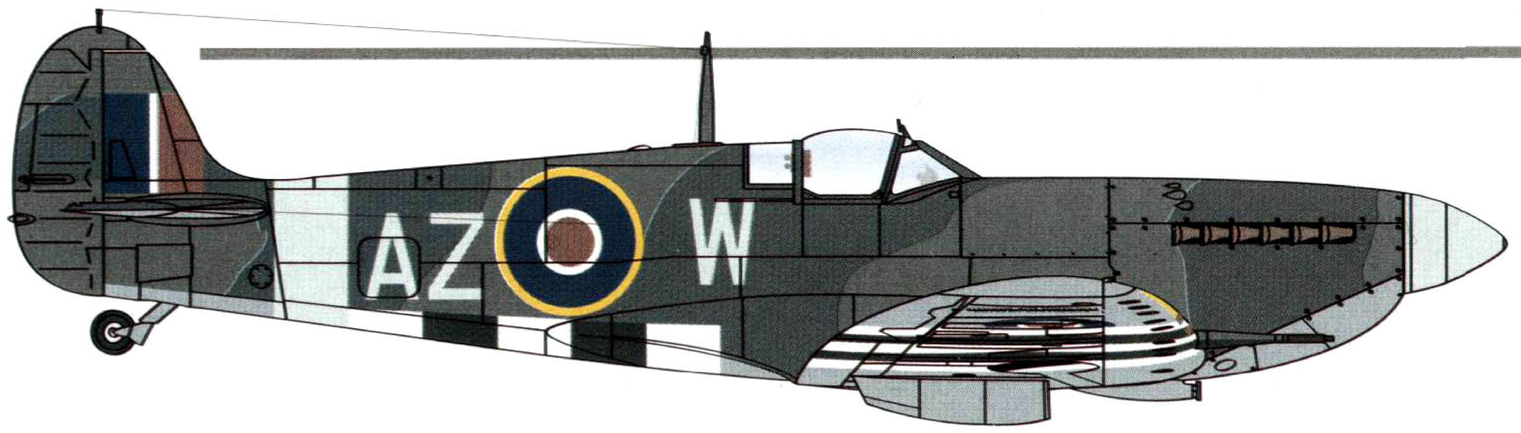




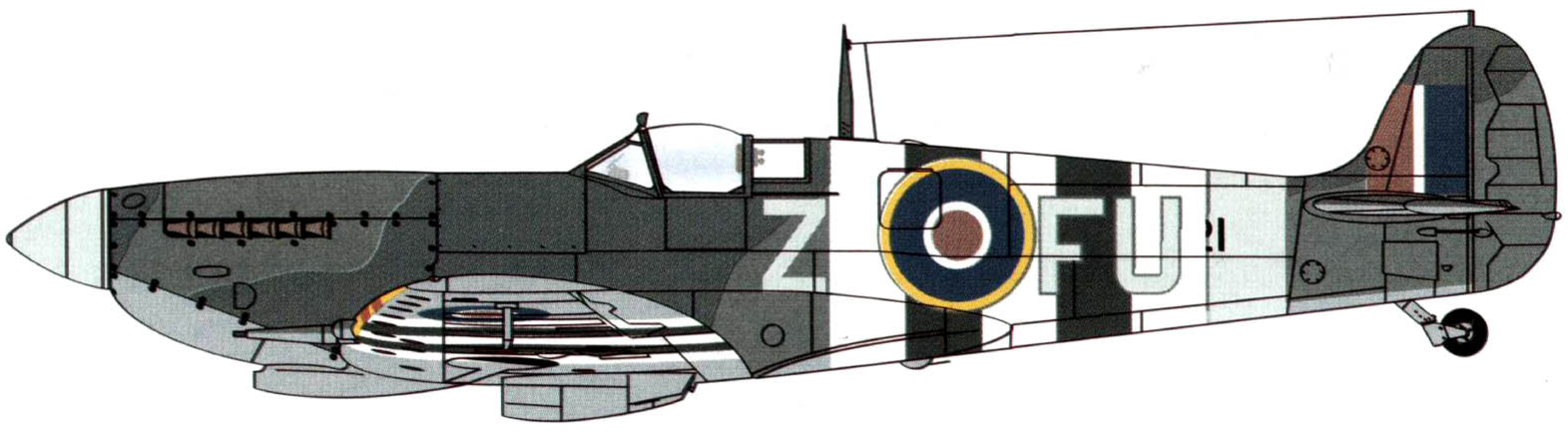




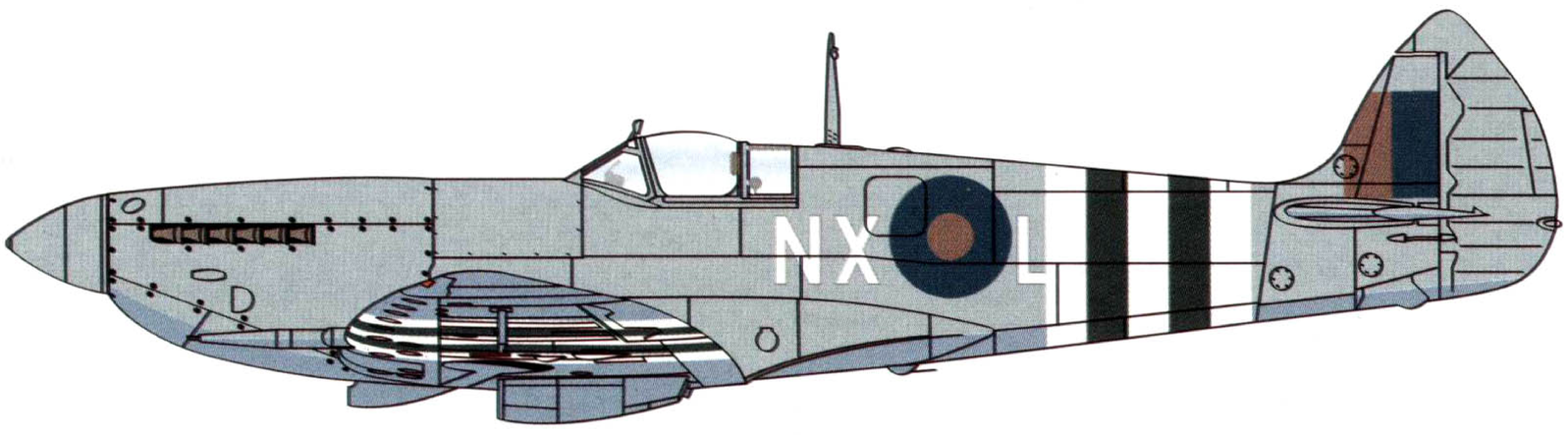
• Coastal Command was very active immediately prior and during 'Operation Overlord', especially the rocket-armed Beaufighters and Mosquitoes, as this selection of photographs show. **TOP** Beaufighter TF Mk X, NE355, EE•H of No 404 Sqn., (RCAF), based at St Eval in June 1944. Previously the squadron had carried the Coastal Command Station Number code '2', but by June 1944 the unit had been allocated the 'EE' squadron code letters. (via G/Capt K Gatward) **MID TOP** Beaufighter TF Mk X, NE548, UB•E of No 455 Sqn., June 1944, firing its battery of eight RPs. Again note the re-located code letters and full set of 'distinctive markings' **MIDDLE** Beaufighter TF Mk X, NT950, MB•T of No 236 Sqn., June 1944. Note how the code letters have been re-applied on to the mid-fuselage. (via Roy C Nesbit) **MID BOTTOM** A pair of Coastal Command Mosquito FB Mk VIs en route to a shipping strike, possibly in September 1944. The aircraft nearest the camera is HR113, LA•V of No 235 Sqn., which has had the 'distinctive markings' on its wing and fuselage upper surfaces painted out. Close examination of the aircraft in the background reveals the code letters, WR•A of No 248 Squadron. (via G A B Lord) **BOTTOM** Backbone of the Medium Bomber squadrons within 2 TAF, was the North American Mitchell. Here, Mitchell Mk II, FV914, VO•A of No 98 Sqn., is on a daylight bombing mission, circa July/August 1944. Note the 'distinctive markings' on the upper surfaces of the wings have either worn away or started to be removed. (via RAF Museum)



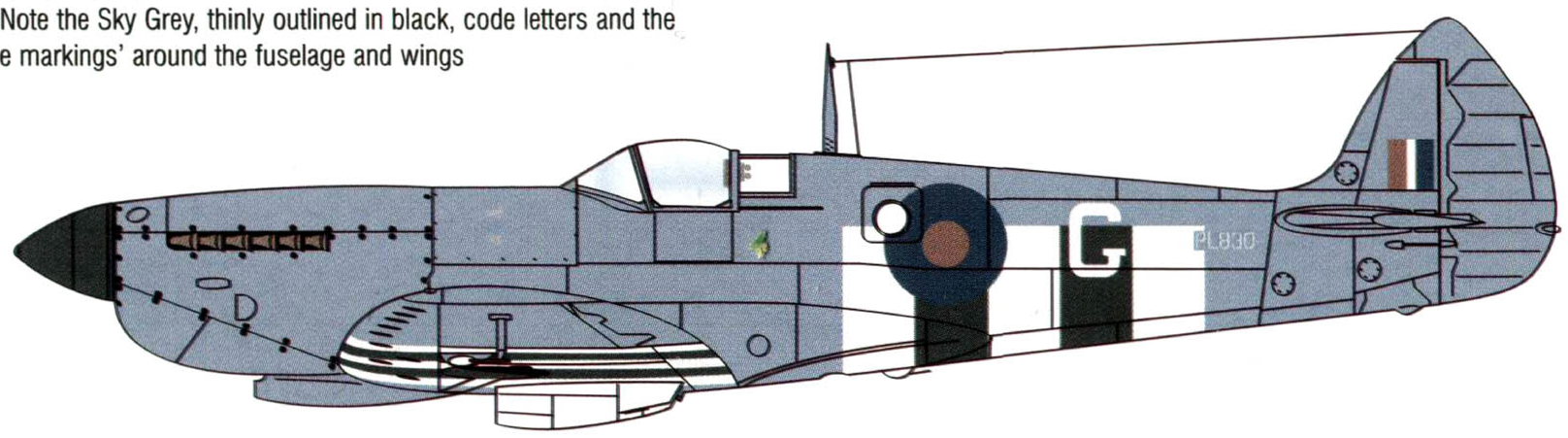
Spitfire Mk Vb, AR364, AZ•W of No 234 (Madras) Squadron, North Weald, mid-August 1944
Finished in the standard Day Fighter Scheme, AR364 is illustrated as she looked following permission given on 6 July 1944, to remove the 'distinctive markings' from the upper surfaces of the wings and fuselage, but to leave them on the under surfaces only. Many Spitfire Mk Vbs were still equipping front-line fighter squadrons in the summer of 1944, but had been progressively updated with improvements that had been introduced on the newer Marks, such as six-stack multiple exhaust manifolds and enlarged horn balance elevators. Note lack of serial number which was probably overpainted



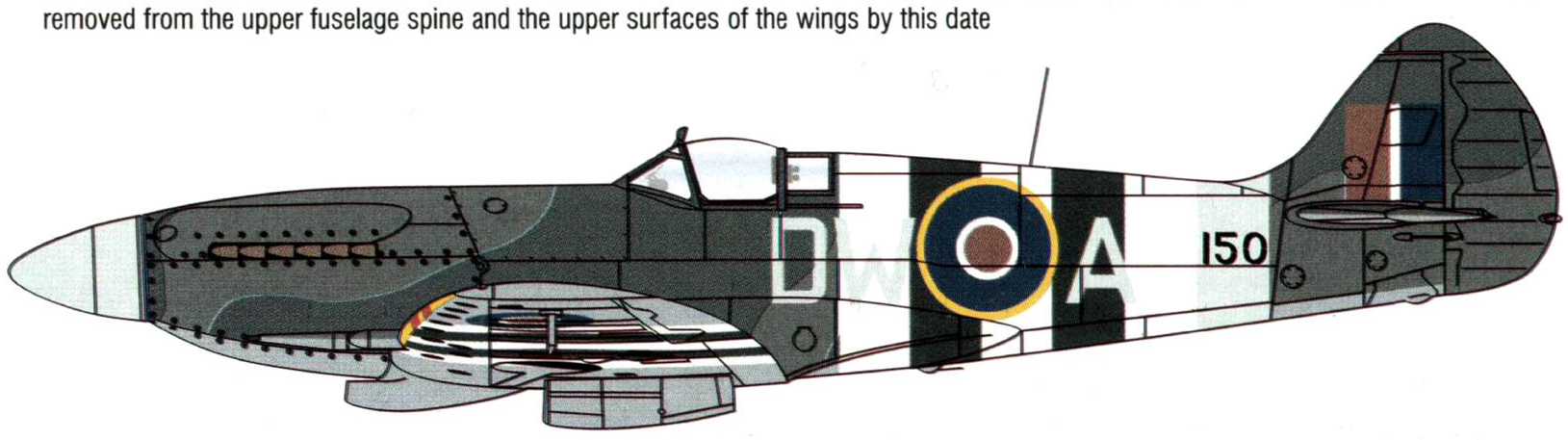
Spitfire LF Mk IXc, MK421, FU•Z of No 453 (Australian) Squadron, B-11 Longues, France, early June 1944
Standard Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces, (in the A Scheme pattern), with Medium Sea Grey under surfaces. MK421 is typical of the scores of Spitfires, in full 'distinctive markings', that crowded the Normandy skies during and immediately after D-Day. Note how the 'distinctive markings' have been carefully applied 'around' the Squadron codes and fuselage roundel



Spitfire HF Mk VII, MD172, NX•L of No 131 Squadron, Culmhead, mid-June 1944
MD172 was finished in the High Flying Day Fighter Scheme, comprising Medium Sea Grey upper surfaces with PR Blue under surfaces, with Red/Blue national markings. Note the Sky Grey, thinly outlined in black, code letters and the narrower than standard 'distinctive markings' around the fuselage and wings

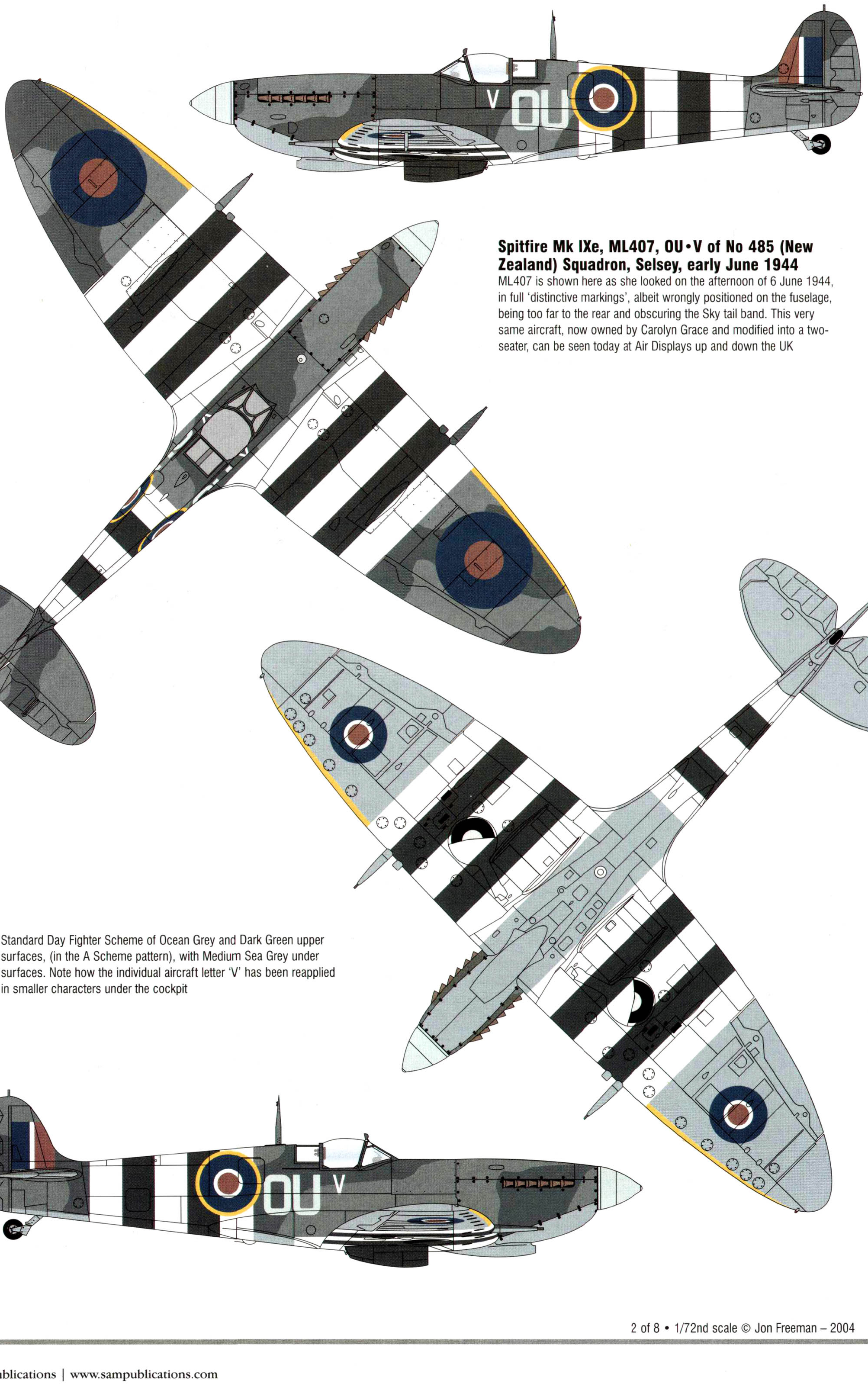


Spitfire PR Mk XI, PL830, 'G' of No 16 Squadron, Northolt, circa mid-July 1944
As a dedicated photo reconnaissance aircraft, PL830 was finished in the overall PR Blue scheme with a Night spinner. Note that the 'distinctive markings' had been removed from the upper fuselage spine and the upper surfaces of the wings by this date



Spitfire Mk XIVc, RB150, DW•A of No 610 Squadron, Harrowbeer, early June 1944
One of only three Squadrons to operate this latest version of the Spitfire in June 1944, No 610 Sqn was part of the Air Defence of Great Britain (ADGB). Standard Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces, (in the A Scheme pattern), with Medium Sea Grey under surfaces

1 of 8 • 1/72nd scale © Jon Freeman – 2004

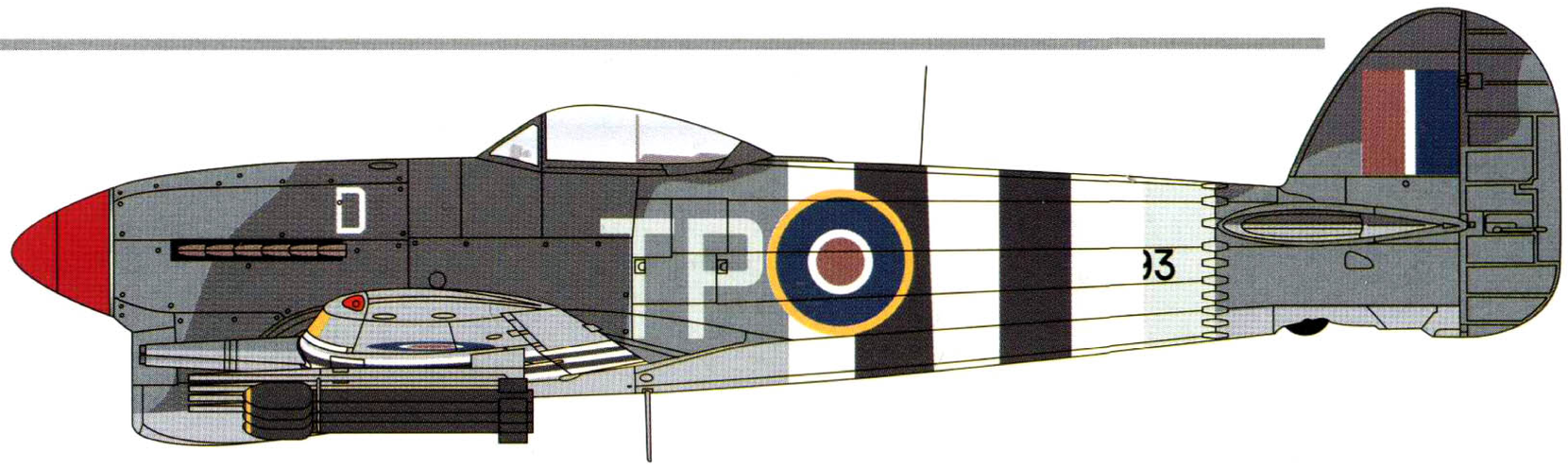


Spitfire Mk IXe, ML407, OU•V of No 485 (New Zealand) Squadron, Selsey, early June 1944

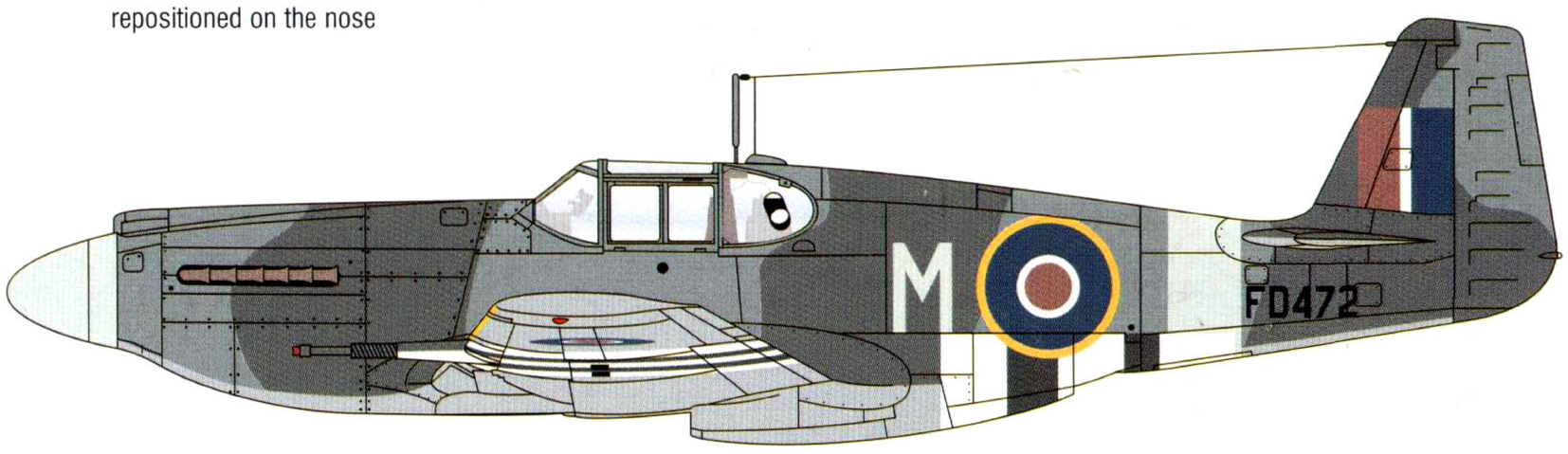
ML407 is shown here as she looked on the afternoon of 6 June 1944, in full 'distinctive markings', albeit wrongly positioned on the fuselage, being too far to the rear and obscuring the Sky tail band. This very same aircraft, now owned by Carolyn Grace and modified into a two-seater, can be seen today at Air Displays up and down the UK

Standard Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces, (in the A Scheme pattern), with Medium Sea Grey under surfaces. Note how the individual aircraft letter 'V' has been reapplied in smaller characters under the cockpit

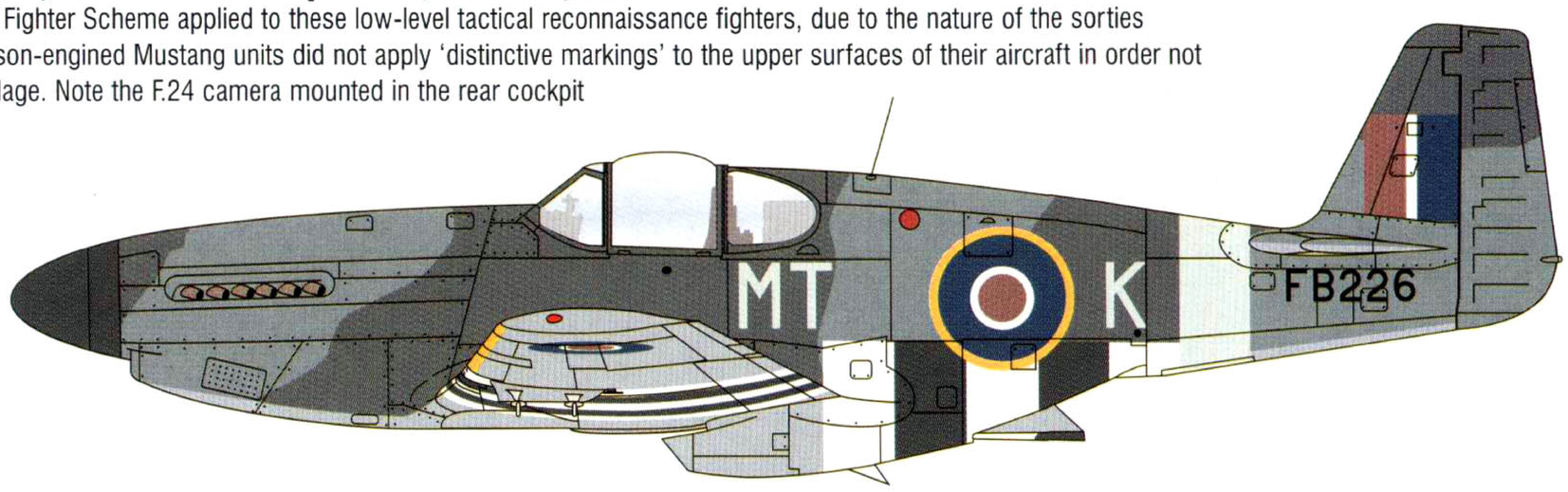
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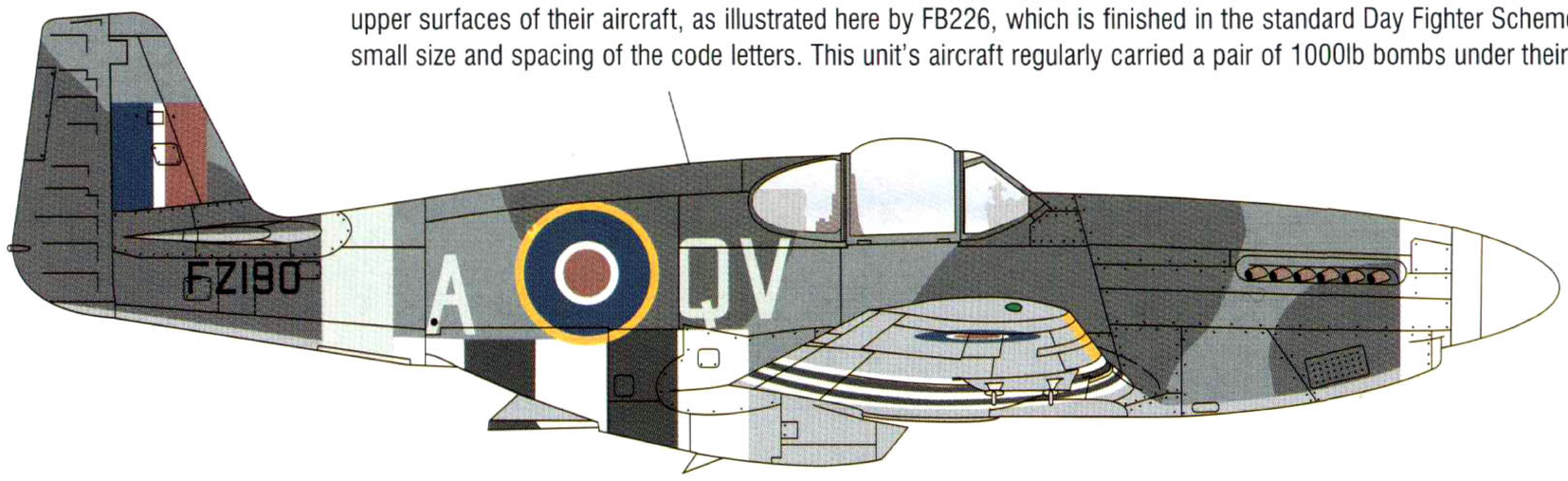
Typhoon Mk Ib, MN293, TP•D of No 198 Squadron, Thorney Island, early June 1944
Finished in the standard Day Fighter Scheme, MN293 sported some very unevenly applied 'distinctive markings' on its fuselage, and a red spinner with a white, (or perhaps the original Sky), backplate. Four-bladed propeller and larger 'Tempest' tailplanes fitted. Note the individual aircraft letter temporarily repositioned on the nose



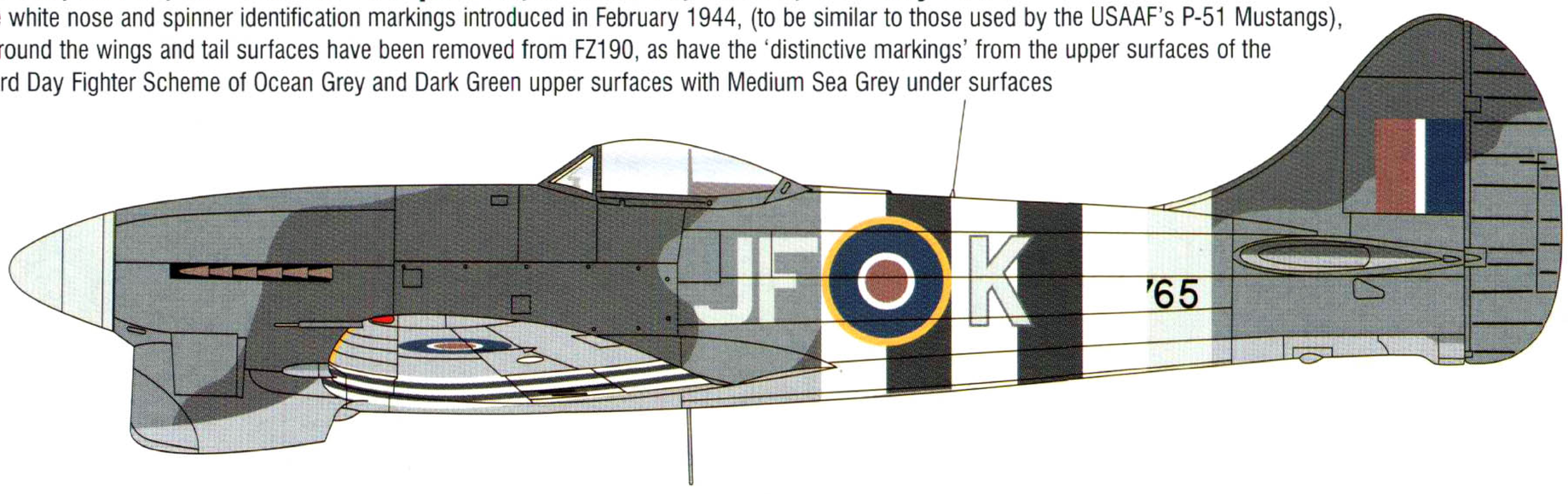
Mustang Mk IA, FD472, 'M' of No 268 Squadron, Gatwick, June 1944
Finished in the standard Day Fighter Scheme applied to these low-level tactical reconnaissance fighters, due to the nature of the sorties undertaken, many of the Allison-engined Mustang units did not apply 'distinctive markings' to the upper surfaces of their aircraft in order not to compromise their camouflage. Note the F.24 camera mounted in the rear cockpit



Mustang Mk III, FB226, MT•K of No 122 Squadron, B-7 Martragney, France, mid-July 1944
By mid-July, most of the aircraft operating from Advanced Landing Grounds in France had removed the 'distinctive markings' from the upper surfaces of their aircraft, as illustrated here by FB226, which is finished in the standard Day Fighter Scheme. Note the relatively small size and spacing of the code letters. This unit's aircraft regularly carried a pair of 1000lb bombs under their wings

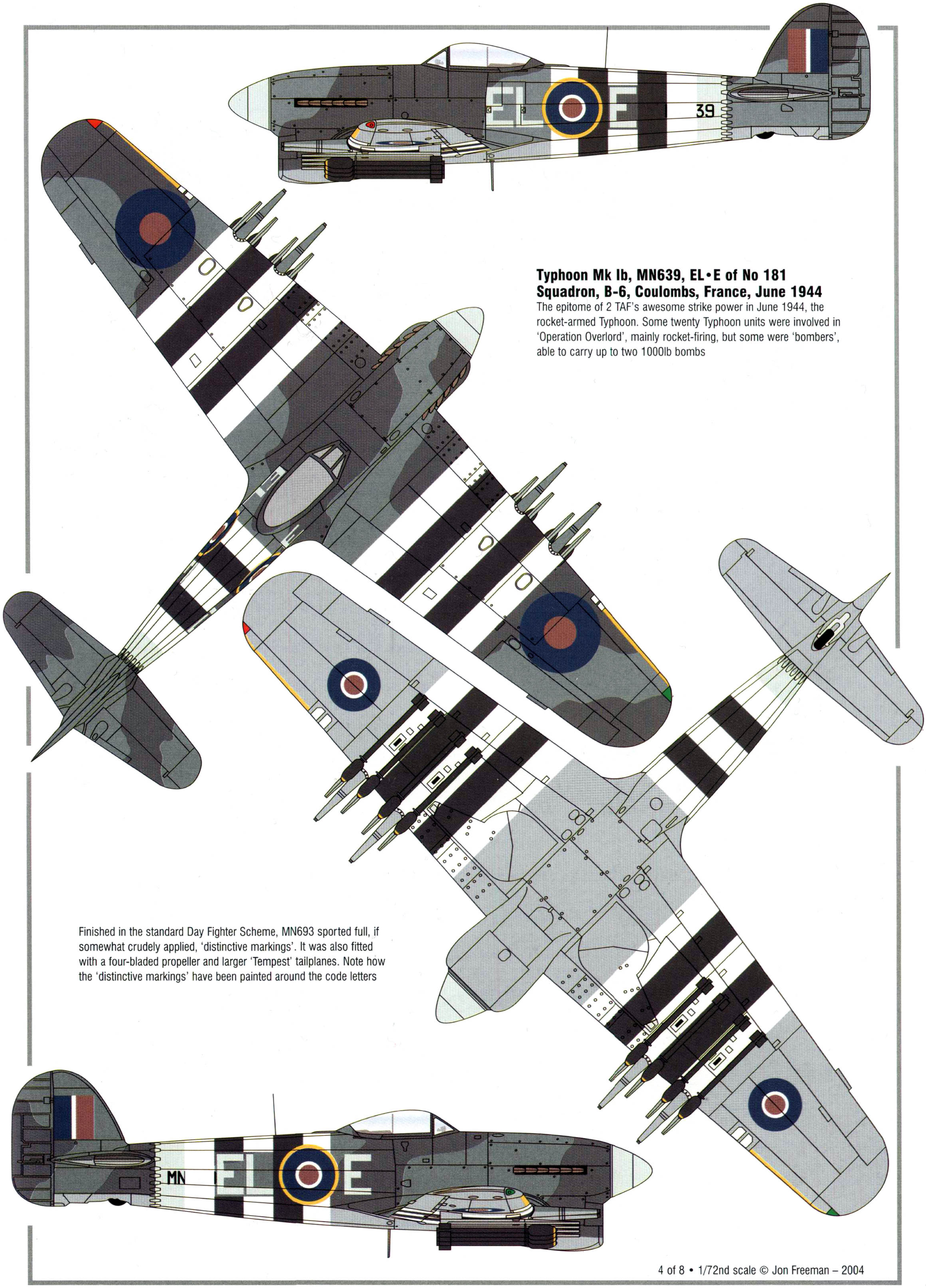


Mustang Mk III, FZ190, QV•A of No 19 Squadron, B-12 Ellon, France, mid-July 1944
Still bearing the white nose and spinner identification markings introduced in February 1944, (to be similar to those used by the USAAF's P-51 Mustangs), the i/d bands around the wings and tail surfaces have been removed from FZ190, as have the 'distinctive markings' from the upper surfaces of the aircraft. Standard Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces with Medium Sea Grey under surfaces



Tempest Mk V, JN765, JF•K of No 3 Squadron, Newchurch, June 1944
A relatively new fighter in the Allies' arsenal, the Tempest Mk V, was only operational with Nos 3 and 486 (New Zealand) Squadrons in June 1944. As part of the Air Defence of Great Britain, (ADGB), the Tempests were initially tasked to cover the invasion beachhead and then, following the first V-1 attacks on 13 June, were retained in the UK to counter the threat. Standard Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces with Medium Sea Grey under surfaces. Note the Mk II Hispano cannon barrel fairings, unique to early production Tempests

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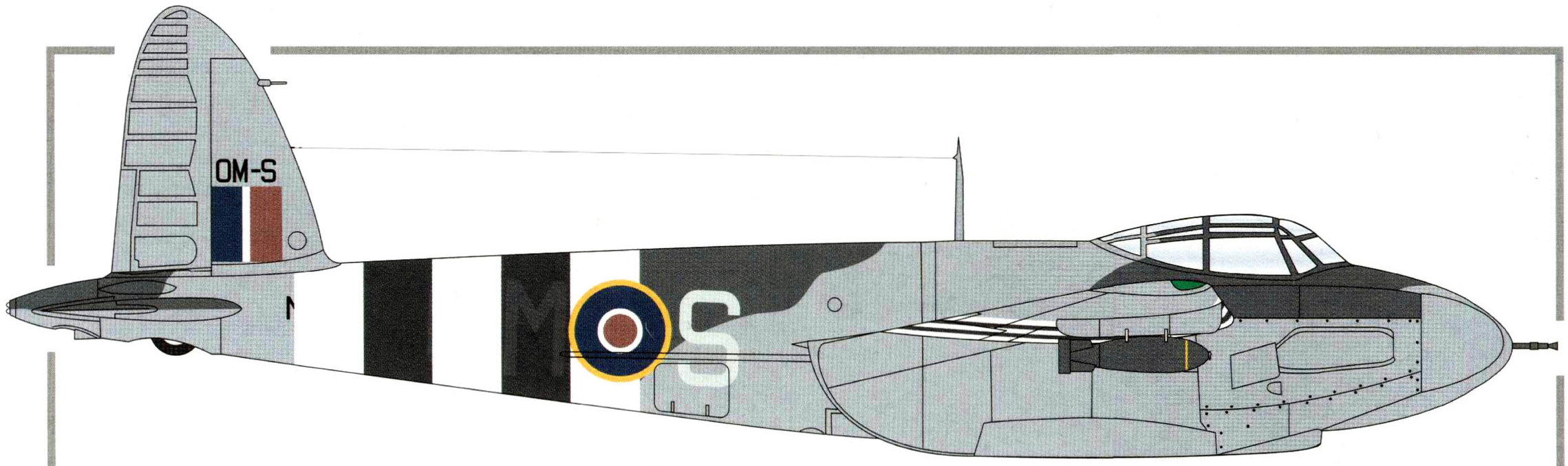


Typhoon Mk Ib, MN639, EL•E of No 181 Squadron, B-6, Coulombs, France, June 1944

The epitome of 2 TAF's awesome strike power in June 1944, the rocket-armed Typhoon. Some twenty Typhoon units were involved in 'Operation Overlord', mainly rocket-firing, but some were 'bombers', able to carry up to two 1000lb bombs

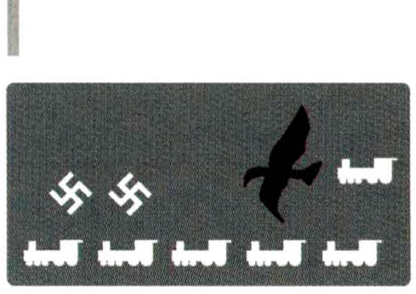
Finished in the standard Day Fighter Scheme, MN693 sported full, if somewhat crudely applied, 'distinctive markings'. It was also fitted with a four-bladed propeller and larger 'Tempest' tailplanes. Note how the 'distinctive markings' have been painted around the code letters

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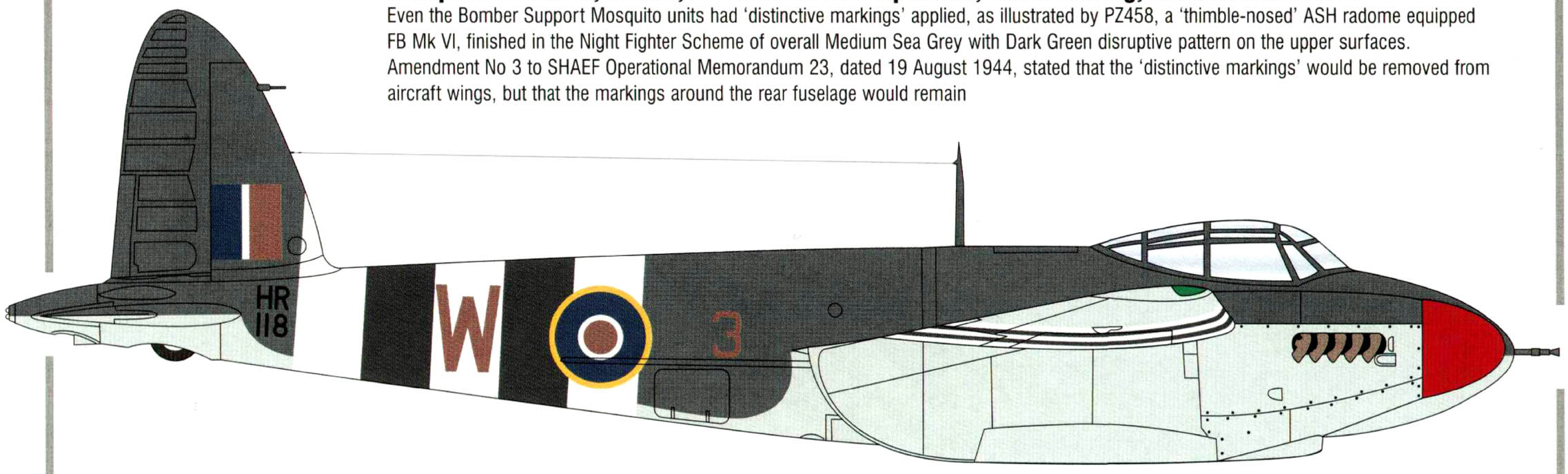
Mosquito FB Mk VI, NS952, OM•S of No 107 Squadron, Lasham, June 1944

Mosquito FB VI fighter/bomber units from 2 Group were used as night intruders in the weeks preceeding, during and immediately following the invasion, to "cause maximum delay to the movement by road and rail of enemy forces". NS952 is finished in the Night Fighter Scheme of overall Medium Sea Grey with Dark Green disruptive pattern on the upper surfaces. Note the full squadron codes repeated in Night on the fin



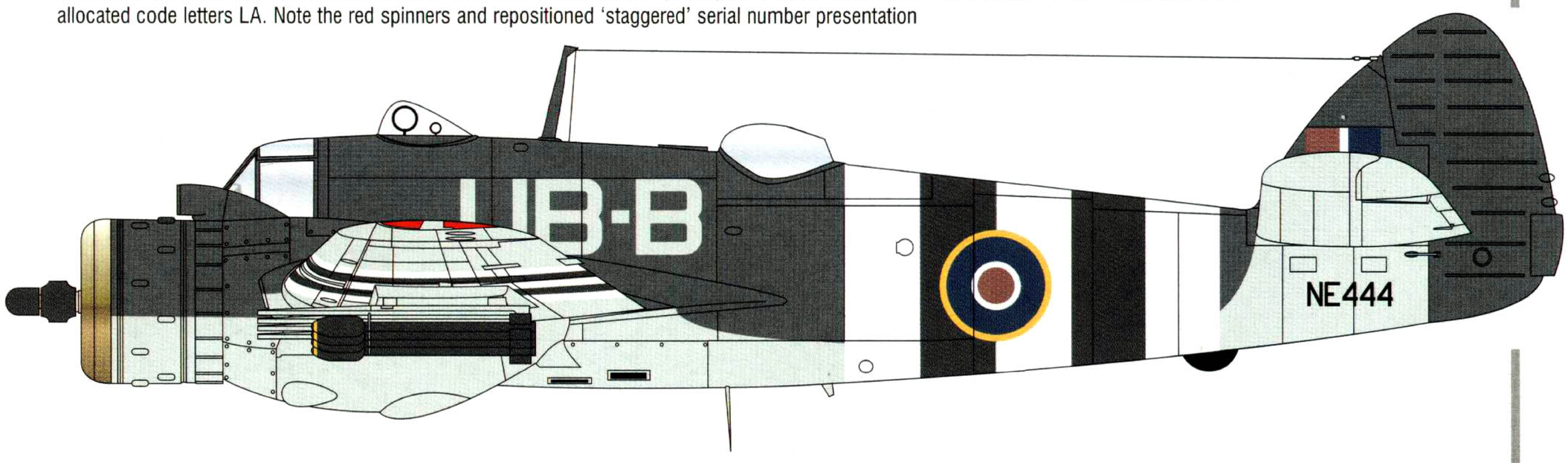
Mosquito FB Mk VI, PZ459, 3P•D of No 515 Squadron, Little Snoring, circa autumn 1944

Even the Bomber Support Mosquito units had 'distinctive markings' applied, as illustrated by PZ458, a 'thimble-nosed' ASH radome equipped FB Mk VI, finished in the Night Fighter Scheme of overall Medium Sea Grey with Dark Green disruptive pattern on the upper surfaces. Amendment No 3 to SHAEF Operational Memorandum 23, dated 19 August 1944, stated that the 'distinctive markings' would be removed from aircraft wings, but that the markings around the rear fuselage would remain



Mosquito FB Mk VI, HR118, 3•W of No 235 Squadron, Portreath, circa June 1944

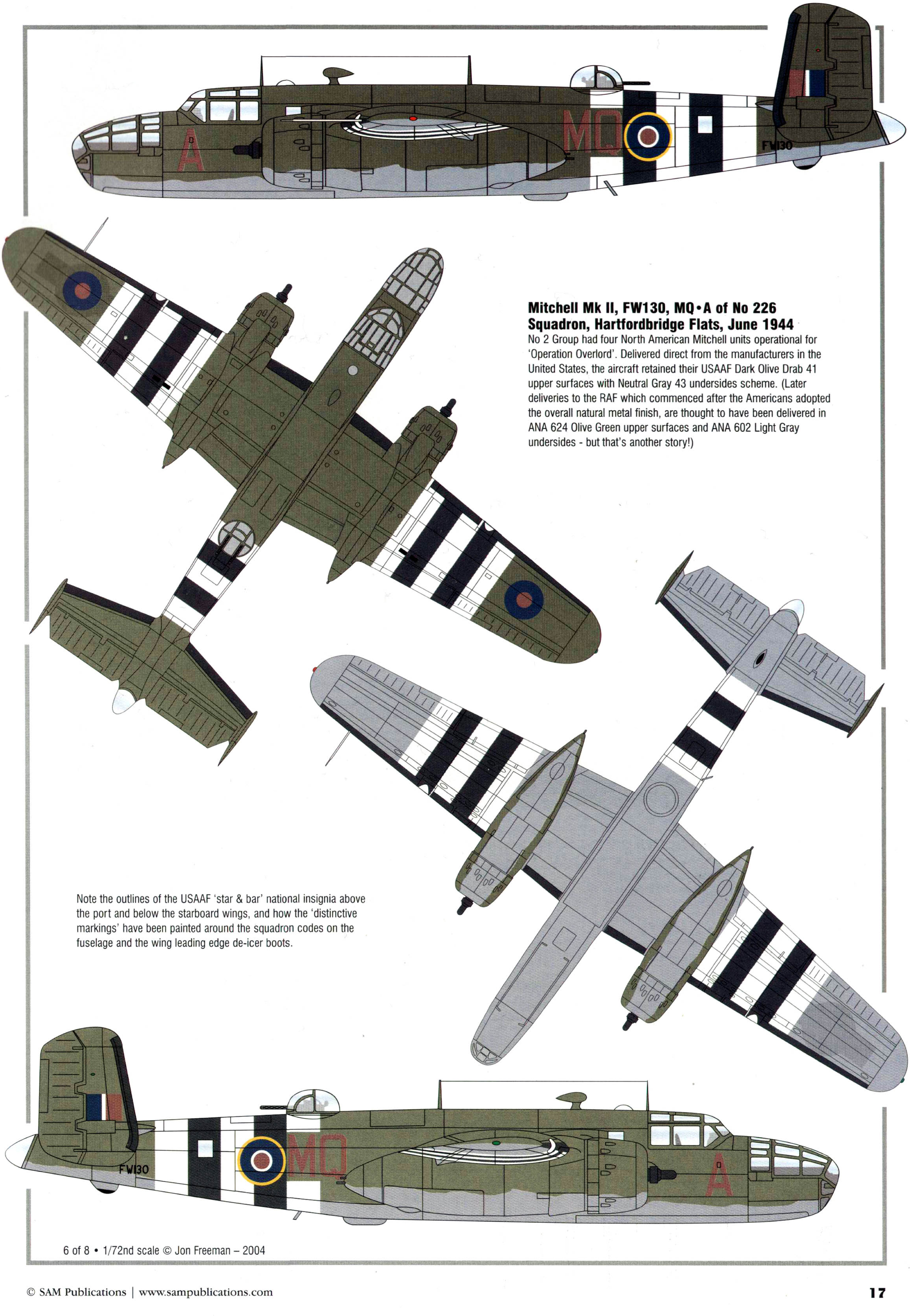
Coastal Command Mosquitoes were invariably repainted, 'in service' following delivery, in the Special Coastal Duties Scheme, of Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Sky undersides. HR118 is illustrated here still sporting the Coastal Command Station Number code, '3', in lieu of its allocated code letters LA. Note the red spinners and repositioned 'staggered' serial number presentation



Beaufighter TF Mk X, NE444, UB•B of No 455 (Australian) Squadron, Langham, circa June 1944

Coastal Command Beaufighters were finished at the manufacturers in the Special Coastal Duties Scheme, of Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Sky undersides, as illustrated by NE444 here, (although some were finished in Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces due to a misunderstanding). Note how the code letters have been relocated to the mid-fuselage to avoud being overpainted by the 'distinctive markings'

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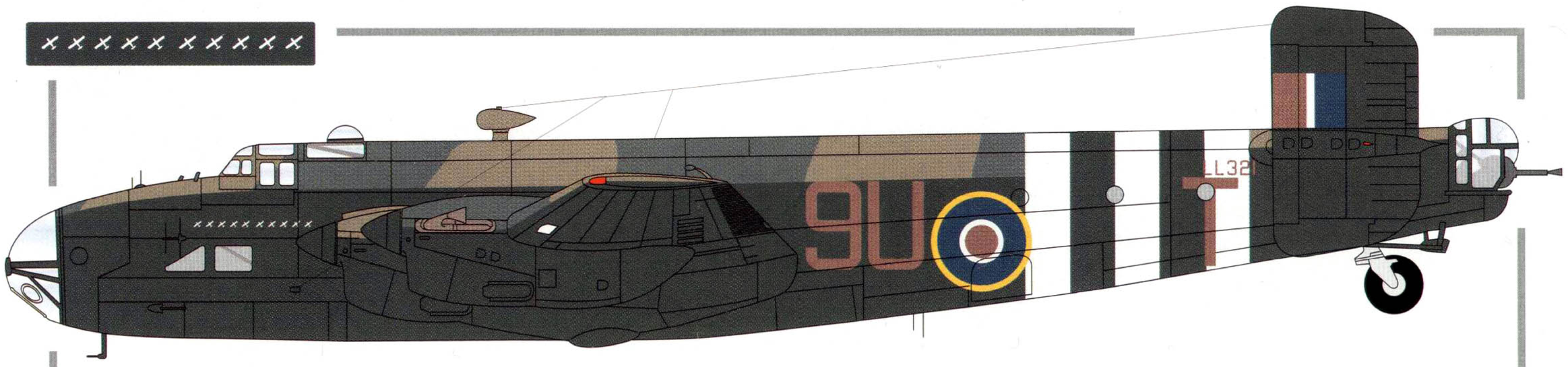


Mitchell Mk II, FW130, MQ•A of No 226 Squadron, Hartfordbridge Flats, June 1944

No 2 Group had four North American Mitchell units operational for 'Operation Overlord'. Delivered direct from the manufacturers in the United States, the aircraft retained their USAAF Dark Olive Drab 41 upper surfaces with Neutral Gray 43 undersides scheme. (Later deliveries to the RAF which commenced after the Americans adopted the overall natural metal finish, are thought to have been delivered in ANA 624 Olive Green upper surfaces and ANA 602 Light Gray undersides - but that's another story!)

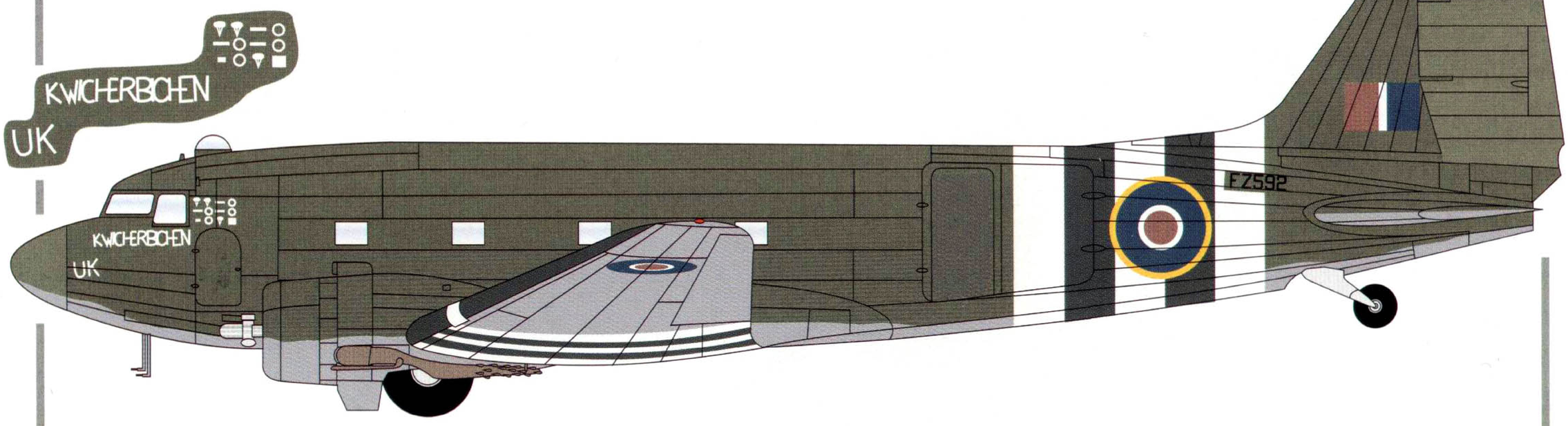
Note the outlines of the USAAF 'star & bar' national insignia above the port and below the starboard wings, and how the 'distinctive markings' have been painted around the squadron codes on the fuselage and the wing leading edge de-icer boots.

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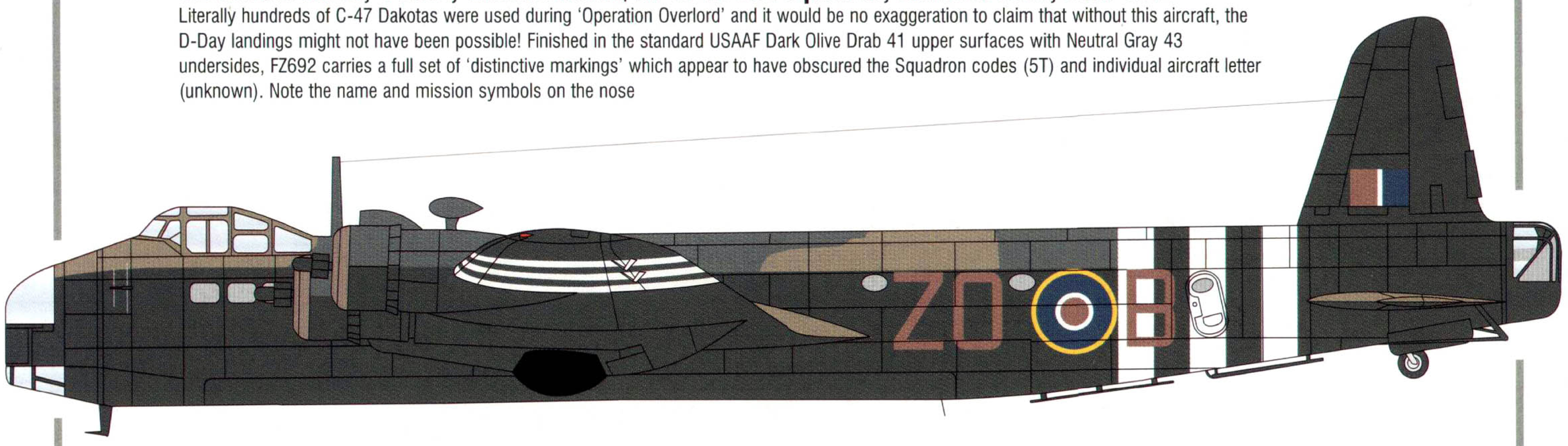
16: Halifax GT Mk V, LL312, 9U•T of No 644 Squadron, Tarrant Rushton, June 1944

This one-time backbone of Bomber Command found a new lease of life as a Glider Tug in 1944. Still finished in the Night Bomber scheme of Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces with Night under surfaces, as a Four-Engined Glider Tug, the aircraft was to be marked identically to twin-engined aircraft, with the wing stripes being located outboard of the outer engine nacelles. However, the photo upon which this illustration is based shows only fuselage stripes! Note the mission symbols on the nose



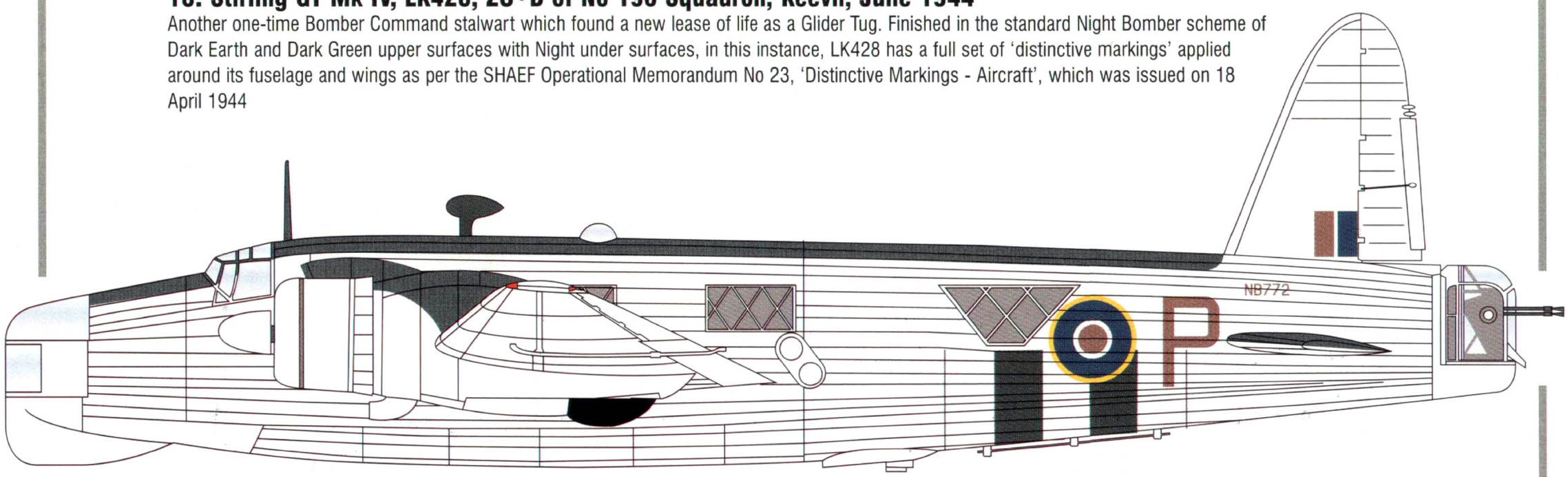
17: Dakota Mk III, FZ692, 'Kwicherbichen/UK' of No 233 Squadron, Blakehill Farm, June 1944

Literally hundreds of C-47 Dakotas were used during 'Operation Overlord' and it would be no exaggeration to claim that without this aircraft, the D-Day landings might not have been possible! Finished in the standard USAAF Dark Olive Drab 41 upper surfaces with Neutral Gray 43 undersides, FZ692 carries a full set of 'distinctive markings' which appear to have obscured the Squadron codes (5T) and individual aircraft letter (unknown). Note the name and mission symbols on the nose



18: Stirling GT Mk IV, LK428, ZO•B of No 196 Squadron, Keevil, June 1944

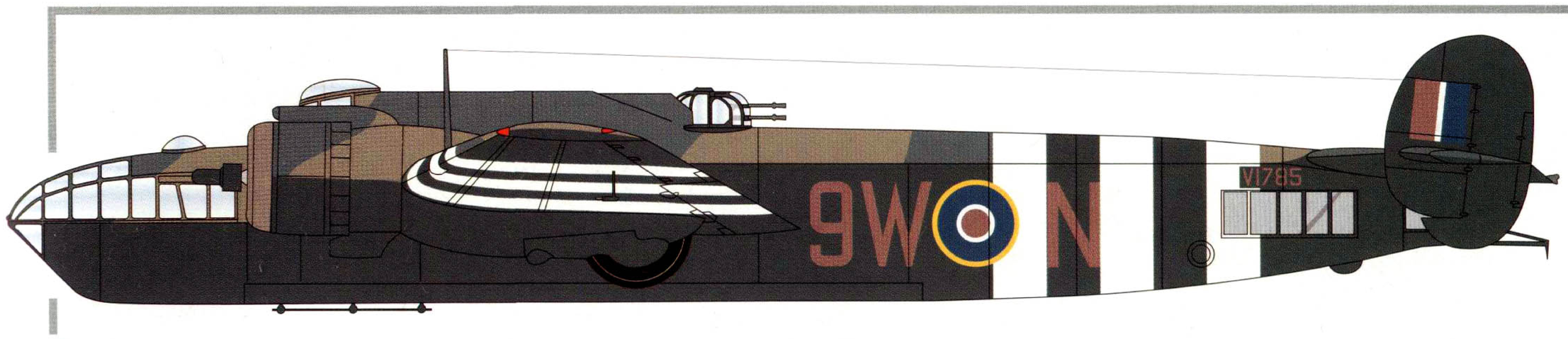
Another one-time Bomber Command stalwart which found a new lease of life as a Glider Tug. Finished in the standard Night Bomber scheme of Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces with Night under surfaces, in this instance, LK428 has a full set of 'distinctive markings' applied around its fuselage and wings as per the SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, 'Distinctive Markings - Aircraft', which was issued on 18 April 1944

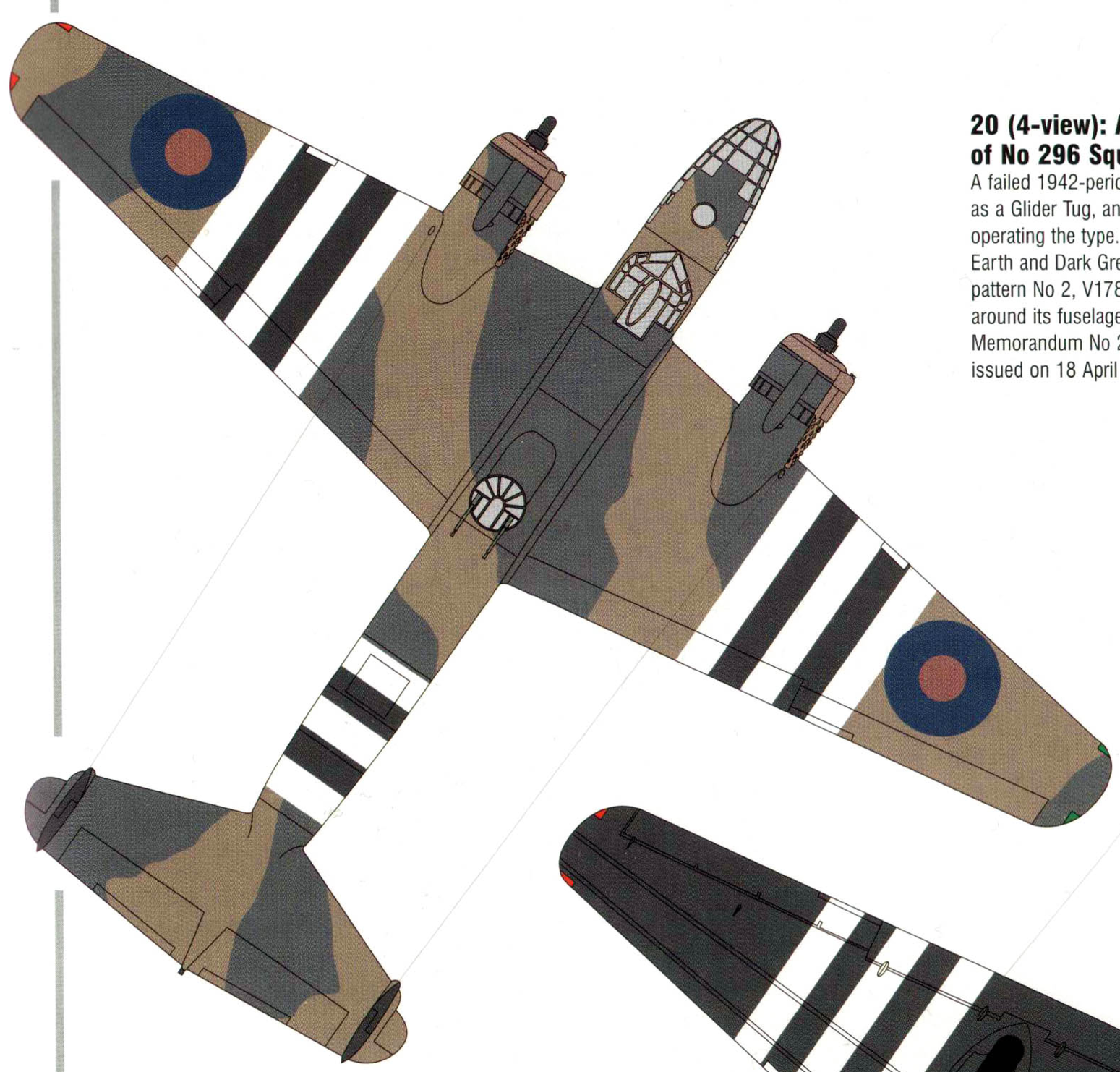


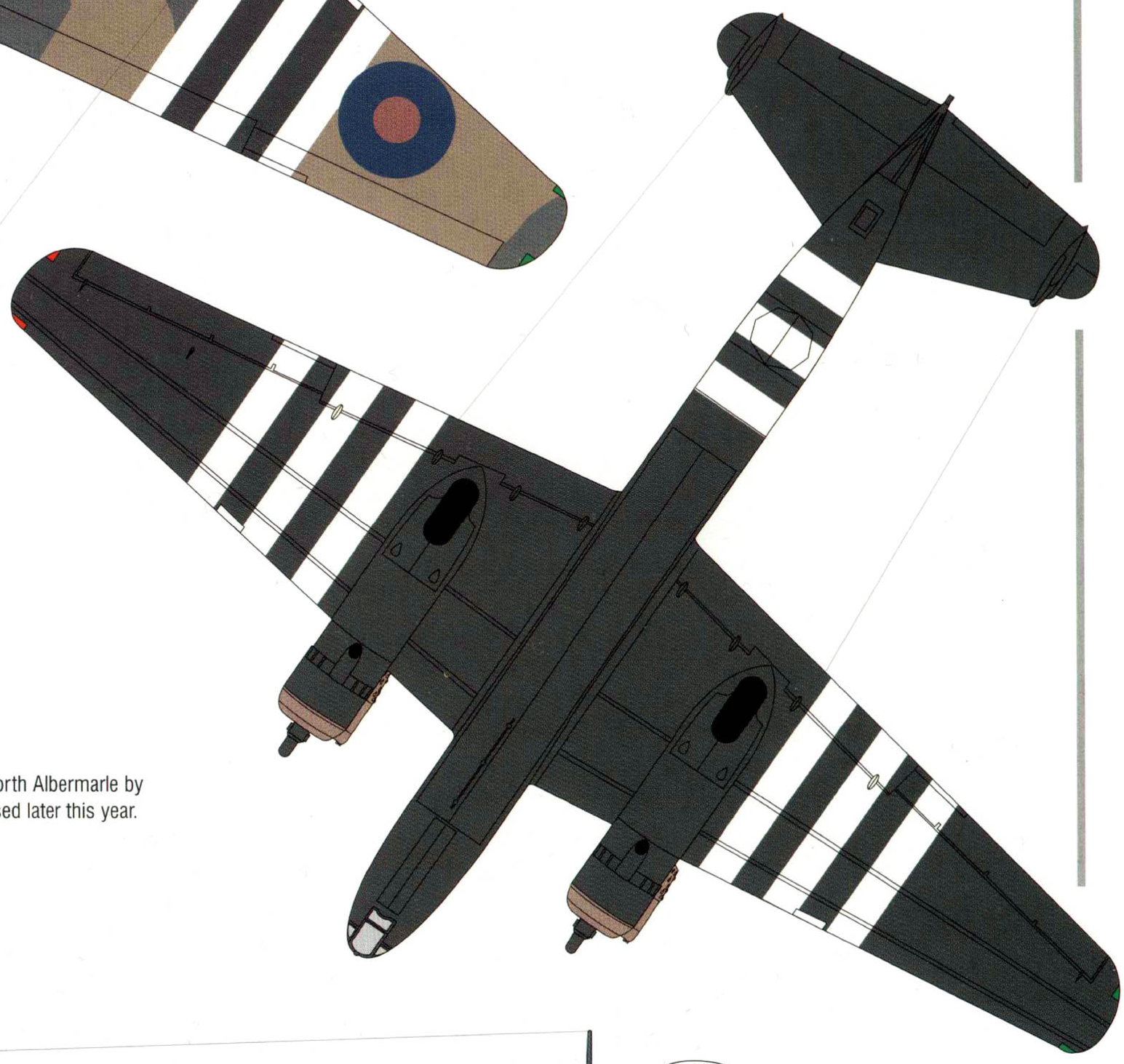
19: Wellington GR Mk XIV, NB772, (7R)•P of No 524 Squadron, Davidstow Moor, June 1944

Although Coastal Command Wellingtons were not directly involved in supporting 'Operation Overlord', they provided an essential preventative guard against U-Boats entering the English Channel and attacking Allied shipping, and as such certain units applied the 'distinctive markings' on their aircraft; NB772 being one so marked. Finished in the Coastal Command, Ordinary Coastal Duties Scheme, of Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with White undersides to Pattern Number 2, the aircraft sported 'distinctive markings' on the underside of the rear fuselage. Note the thin black 'outline' to the two outer white stripes

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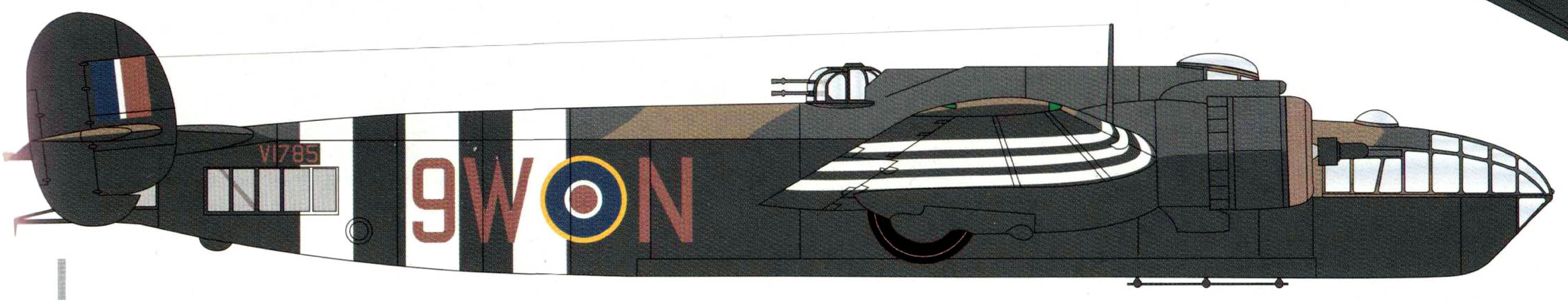




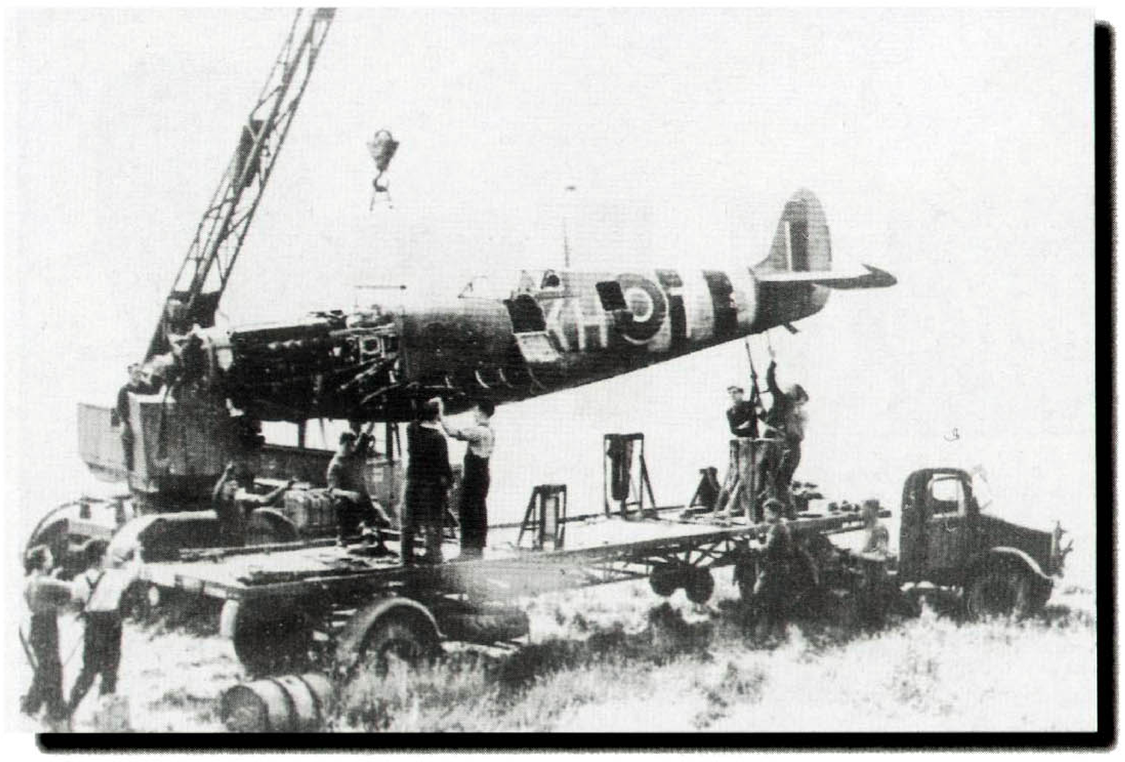
20 (4-view): Albermarle GT Mk V, V1785, 9W•N of No 296 Squadron, Brize Norton, June 1944

A failed 1942-period bomber design, the Albermarle found a niche as a Glider Tug, and by June 1944, some four squadrons were operating the type. Finished in the Night Bomber scheme of Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces with Night under surfaces to pattern No 2, V1785 has a full set of 'distinctive markings' applied around its fuselage and wings as per the SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, 'Distinctive Markings - Aircraft', which was issued on 18 April 1944

Ed Note: A 1/72 scale kit of the Armstrong Whitworth Albermarle by 'Valom', of the Czech Republic, is due to be released later this year.



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or American aircraft in the form of the blue and white 'star and bar' in any way.

Distinctive Markings – single-engine aircraft

Upper and under surfaces of wings: Single-engine aircraft were to carry distinctive markings on the upper and under surfaces of the wings in the form of five black and white stripes each 18 inches wide. The stripes were to be parallel to the longitudinal axis of the aircraft and were to be arranged in order from the centre of the aircraft outwards thus: white, black, white, black, white. These stripes were to end six inches inboard of the national markings.

Fuselage: The fuselage was to be painted with five parallel black and white stripes, again, each being 18 inches wide, which were to run completely around the fuselage. The outside edge of the rearmost white band was to be 18 inches from the leading edge of the tailplane.

Distinctive Markings – twin-engine aircraft

Upper and under surfaces of wings: Twin-engine aircraft were to carry their five black and white stripes on the upper and under surfaces of the wings from the engine nacelles outwards. Arranged in the same white, black, white, black, white order as given for single-engine aircraft, on twin-engine aircraft, the stripes were each to be 24 inches wide.

Fuselage: Again as with single-engine aircraft, twin-engine aircraft were to be painted with five parallel black and white stripes which were to run completely around the fuselage. Each of these stripes was to be 24 inches wide with the outside edge of the rearmost white band being 18 inches from the leading edge of the tailplane.

Distinctive markings – Four-engine troop carrier aircraft and Glider Tugs

These aircraft were to be marked identically to twin-engine aircraft with the wing stripes being located outboard of the outer engine nacelles. The black and white stripes were in no case to be applied over the national markings which took precedence. The stripes on the wings were to stretch from the leading to trailing edges unless the aircraft was fitted with special equipment such as de-icer boots which were not to be painted over.

The Distinctive markings were illustrated in an Appendix which showed them applied to a single-engine aircraft which looked like a Spitfire and a twin-engine aircraft which looked like a Mosquito. This Memo was widely distributed throughout the Allied forces where it found its way into various kinds of orders. One example of this is to be found in the Naval Orders prepared for 'Operation Neptune' where paragraph 16 of ON 11 dated 1 May 1944, states that, *"A high standard of aircraft recognition is expected from all Naval forces taking part in this operation. Details of Distinctive Markings for Allied aircraft will be found in ON 11 appendix V"*. Appendix V of ON 11 was essentially identical to SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23 right down to the diagrams showing how the markings were to be applied.

Another example is to be found in the 11 Group and IX Fighter Command Joint Air Plan and Executive Orders for 'Operation Neptune' which was issued at Uxbridge on 25 May 1944, the relevant section of which is quoted below:

Special and Distinctive markings for Aircraft

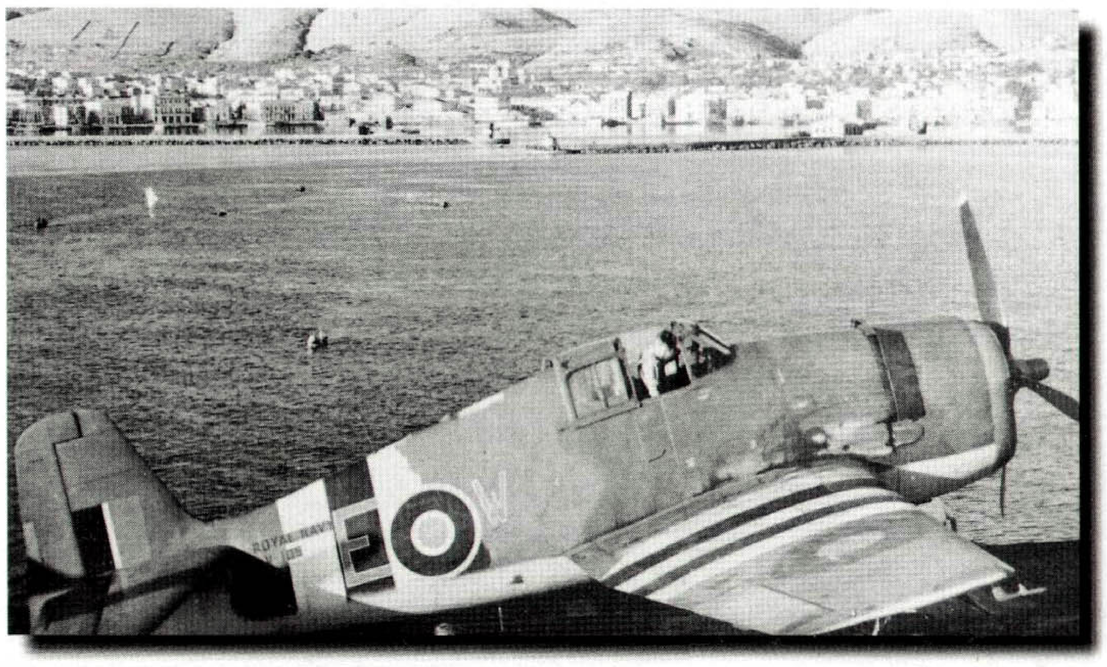
61. In order to facilitate the identification of friendly aircraft by Ground, Assault and Naval forces and other friendly aircraft, certain types of American and British aircraft during 'Operation Neptune' as enumerated below, are to be painted with special and distinctive markings.
62. Types of British and American aircraft which are to carry the special and distinctive markings
    i) Fighters and fighter Bombers
    ii) Tactical and Photographic Reconnaissance aircraft
    iii) Aircraft employed in spotting for naval gunfire and field artillery
    iv) Light and medium Bombers
    v) Troop carrier aircraft including four-engine types
    vi) Glider tugs including four engine types
    vii) Gliders
    viii) Liaison aircraft and Air Observation aircraft employed in forward areas for fire spotting and adjustment, or for advanced aircraft control
    ix) Coastal Command aircraft, Air Sea Rescue and disembarked Fleet Air Arm aircraft except seaplanes and four-engined aircraft which need not be marked
63. Types of British and American aircraft which are not required to carry the special and distinctive markings
    i) Four-engined bombers
    ii) Air Transports
    iii) Night Fighters
    iv) Seaplanes
64. Details of the special and distinctive markings to be painted on the types of aircraft enumerated at para 62 above have already been distributed to all concerned under separate cover.
65. The date and time when these special and distinctive markings are to be painted on the appropriate types of aircraft will be communicated at a later date. They are not, repeat not, to be painted on aircraft prior to the receipt of the executive order for this action to be taken.

It is interesting that when this document is compared to the original SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23, that Gliders have now been added to the list of aircraft types which are to carry the distinctive markings.

Much the same information was passed to units operating in the Middle East by HQ Mediterranean Allied Air Forces Office of the Director of Operations Operation Memorandum 43. Dated 26 May

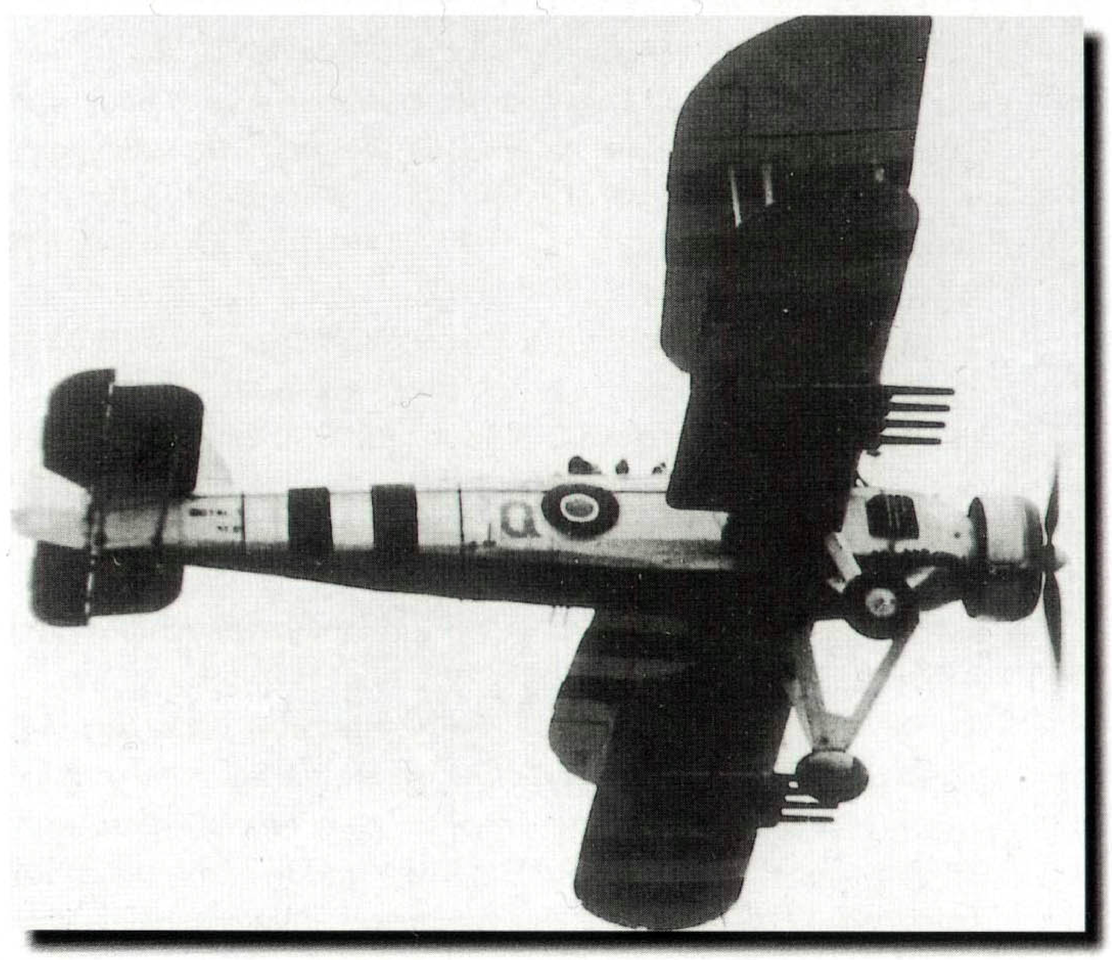


TOP Amongst the most numerous RAF aircraft type used during 'Operation Overlord' was the Spitfire. This particular example, an LF Mk IX, MK859, KH•T of No 403 Sqn (RCAF), is being recovered after being brought down by flak on 11 August 1944. Note that even at this 'late' date it still carries full 'distinctive markings' around the fuselage (via Canadian Forces) **ABOVE** Spitfire Mk IX (serial unknown) DB•R, of No 411 (Canadian) Sqn, having its Distinctive Markings applied on 3rd/4th June 1944. Note how crude the stripes were! (Canadian Official)









1944, this memo stated that aircraft with these distinctive markings might be seen in the Mediterranean Theatre, and any aircraft from the Mediterranean which entered the area of operations was to be so marked.

The materials with which the distinctive markings were to be applied were detailed in 11 Groups Administrative Instructions for Operation Overlord which were issued on 27 May 1944. Appendix 'C' of this document dealt with Equipment whilst Paragraph 8 of appendix 'C' was entitled 'Distemper' and stated the following, *"All servicing echelons and Wing Headquarters of 2 TAF and No 85 Group should hold sixteen distemper brushes per Day Squadron served. Air Sea Rescue Squadrons should hold one brush per IE aircraft. Equipment sections of Stations and 2 TAF and No 85 Group Wings should hold distemper ready for immediate issue on the basis of two and a half gallons of Night Distemper and three and a half gallons of White Distemper for each Day fighter type aircraft and three and a half gallons of Night Distemper and five gallons of White Distemper for each Walrus or Warwick Air Sea Rescue aircraft.*

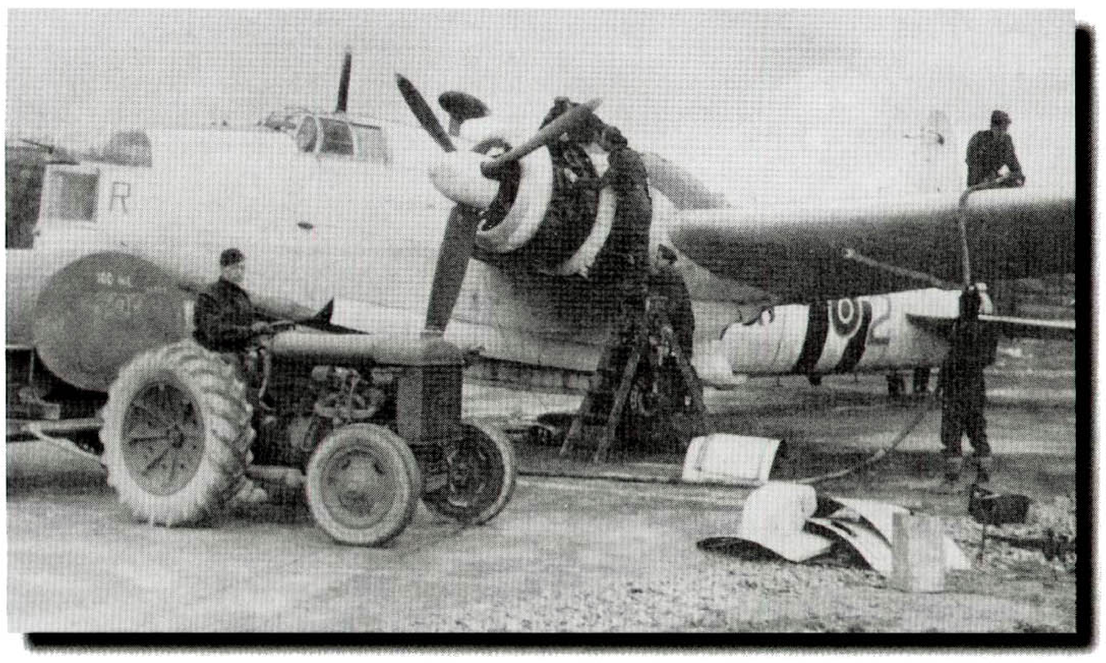
Note: A proportion of the issue will be an oil based distemper which will require a longer period to dry but must nevertheless be used wherever practicable. Issue of the necessary distemper for all units is being arranged".

Black and White 'paint'

The Material Specification for water-based Matt Finish Distemper, DTD 441, was issued in August 1940. The material was to consist of a smooth distemper suitable for application to doped fabric or painted metal surfaces by brush or spray, or it could be supplied in the form of a paste or powder which, when mixed with water in amounts to be stated by the supplier, would produce a distemper. One coat of the distemper when applied to fabric or metal surfaces was to match the standard in colour, finish and opacity and be 'hard' dry in an hour. After being allowed to dry at room temperature for two weeks, the distemper was to be capable of being removed by the application of hot water leaving the original painted or doped surface undamaged.

The mention made above of an oil-based distemper may go some way towards accounting for the difficulty which many units experienced in removing the distinctive markings when instructed to do so in July 1944. At the time of writing, a material specification

• The Fleet Air Arm was also heavily involved in 'Operation Overlord' and amongst this selection of four of the types used, one of the Senior Services' idiosyncrasies is highlighted. **TOP LEFT** Although not directly involved in 'Operation Overlord', this Hellcat Mk I, JV105, coded E•W of No 800 NAS, aboard HMS Emperor, off Kyhos, Greece, circa early September 1944, following the Squadron's part in the invasion of the south of France in August, serves as an example of an Allied aeroplane in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, carrying 'distinctive markings', as per Operation Memorandum 43, dated 26 May 1944. (via R L Ward) **TOP RIGHT** Avenger Mk I, of either No 849 or 850 NAS, (both) based at Perranporth, on anti-submarine patrol off Cornwall, circa August 1944. Note the full 'distinctive markings' with the outer white bands thinly outlined in black. (via J Manson) **MIDDLE** A Wildcat Mk V, JV579/F of No 846 NAS, temporarily based at Limavady, Northern Ireland, in 15 Group, during June 1944, prior to embarking on HMS Trumpeter for operations off the Norwegian coast. Again full 'distinctive markings' have been applied, but this time without the outer white bands thinly outlined in black. Note how they have been carefully painted around the ROYAL NAVY legend and the serial number. (via Ray Sturtivant) **BOTTOM** Rocket-armed Swordfish Mk II, coded 'Q', (serial NF???), of No 816 NAS, based at St Merryn in the predominately white, anti-submarine, scheme, looking for 'trade' off the French coast circa July 1944. Full 'distinctive markings' have been applied with the outer white bands thinly outlined in black - an anomaly seen on some FAA Swordfish and Avengers. (via RAN)



for an oil-based distemper of some kind is unknown. One further explanation of the difficulty experienced in removing the markings may be that if insufficient supplies of distemper were available, paint such as that to DTD 314 for permanent synthetic finishes might have been used instead.

The Executive Order to apply the distinctive markings to the aircraft is thought to have been passed to the squadrons in 2 TAF by ASIO No 19 on 3 June 1944, which directed that the distinctive markings be applied to the aircraft after the last sortie of the day. During the research for this article, the author examined many of the participating squadrons' Operations Record Books, (ORBs), only to find that comparatively few squadrons found the order to apply the black and white markings worth recording! One squadron apparently found a visit by a mobile dentist more worthy of mention, especially on account of the presence of two attractive female nurses!

Those squadrons which do mention the application of the markings confirm 3 June 1944 as the date of application, although work on some squadrons seems to have been carried over into the evening of D-Day itself.

For example, the entry of 3 June 1944 in the ORB of No 271 Sqn, equipped with Dakotas at Blakehill Farm, records that *"All the aircraft were painted with three thick white stripes on the fuselage and wings. This is the standard marking for all British aircraft operating over enemy territory"*; whilst No 297 Squadron's ORB entry for 3 June states that, *"Only three aircraft flew ferrying gliders from Tarrant Rushton. The Servicing Echelon were thus given every opportunity to work on the aircraft AEF markings being placed thereon"*. No 313 (Czech) Sqn, based at Appledram equipped with Spitfires, also marked their aircraft on 3 June as their ORB entry for that day states that, *"In the evening the aircraft were marked with 15 inch (sic) black and white stripes on the wings and fuselage"*.

Other squadrons may have begun the job of applying the markings slightly later. The ORB of No 298 Sqn, based at Tarrant Rushton and equipped with Halifax GT Mk Vs, recorded that 4 June was, *"A day of preparation"*, and that, *"The aircraft now have 'invasion marks' painted on them, that is black and white bands towards the tips of the wings and the end of the fuselage. In this warpaint they are not allowed off the circuit"*, whilst the ORB of No 488 (New Zealand) Sqn, based at Zeals and equipped with Mosquito NF XIIIs, recorded on 6 June itself that, *"The painting of the new colour markings was completed today"*.

The application of the distinctive markings to No 488 Squadron's Mosquitoes is interesting since it predates the instruction to apply the markings to Night Fighters by 24 hours. Whether this was because of imperfectly understood orders or that 488 Sqn was usually employed in the Intruder role and was therefore considered to be a 'Fighter/Bomber' rather than 'Night Fighter' squadron is unclear.

As is usual with markings applied by the squadrons themselves, as opposed to on the production line, there was some variation in the location and size of the markings. Note that the ORB entry for No 313 Squadron states that the stripes applied to their aircraft were *15 inch* rather than the 18 inch laid down. Whether this was actually the case is not known, but it suggests that there might have been some variations in size. Photographs provide ample evidence of variations in the location of the markings. The extent of these variations can be seen in the photographs an illustrations accompanying this article.

One unusual anomaly is the practice by some Fleet Air Arm and Coastal Command units of applying a thin black line to the borders of the outermost white stripes which are visible on photographs of some Swordfish and Avengers. How widespread this practice was, and whether it had official blessing is currently unknown. Its purpose would appear to be to better delineate the distinctive markings on aircraft which were largely finished in White for their anti-submarine role.

Codes and serials

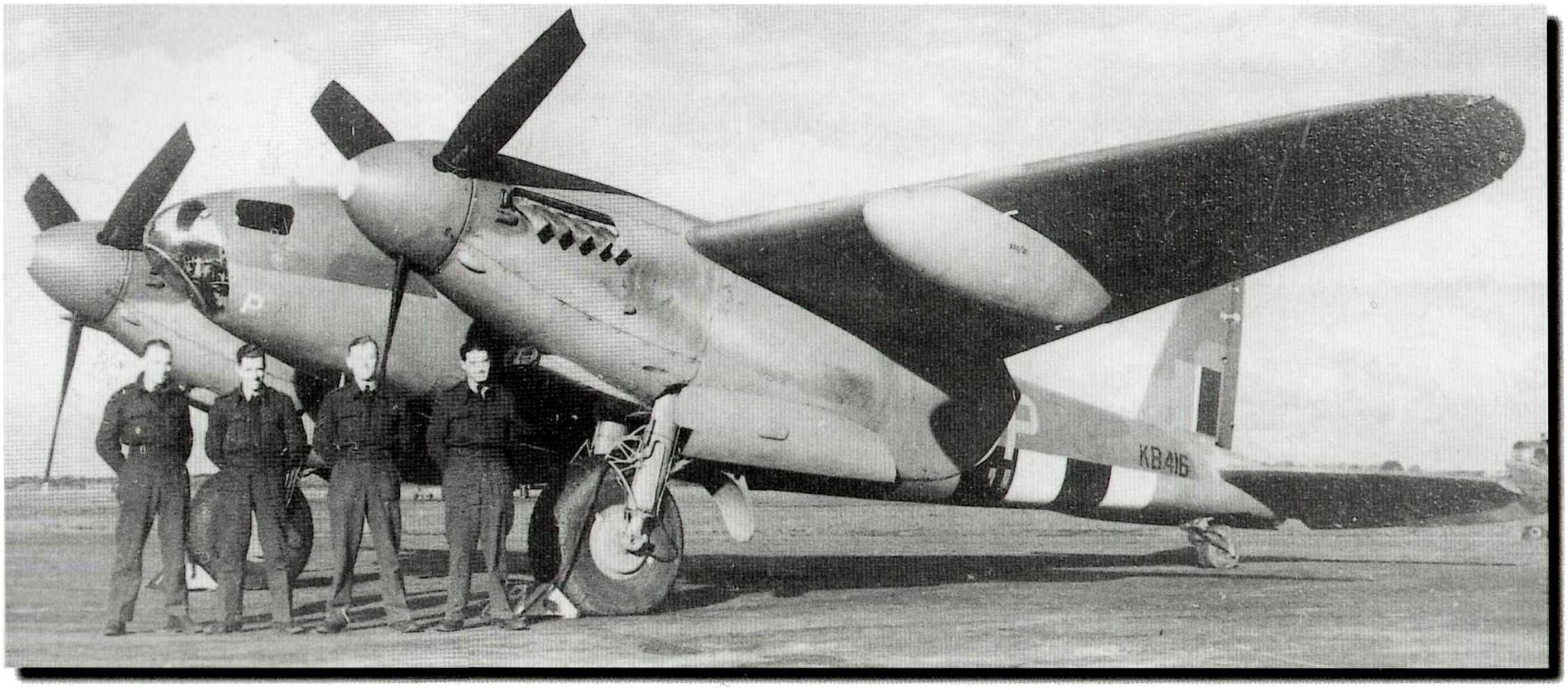
The application of the distinctive markings had some side effects on the other markings, usually the squadron codes and serial numbers carried by the aircraft concerned. Whilst SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23 specifically stated that national markings must not be obscured, no mention was made of the codes and serials. Different units dealt with this problem in different ways.

For example, Coastal Command's Strike squadrons, equipped with Beaufighters and Mosquitoes moved their codes to the top of the fuselage in front of the national markings and grouped them together with the two-letter Squadron code separated from the individual aircraft letter by a hyphen. Serial numbers were often rearranged, especially on Mosquitoes with the two letters being placed above the three numbers which remained in the usual place on the rear fuselage.

Some units painted around the serial number, some units painted over the serial number and others reapplied the painted-out serial numbers in smaller characters, of between 2 and 4 inches high, on the fin above the flash. Again some of the many different variations in the way other markings were affected by the application of distinctive markings can be seen in the accompanying photographs and artwor



TOP Wellington GR Mk XIV, NB839, 2•R of No 407 Sqn., (RCAF), based at Limavady, Northern Ireland, circa June 1944. The aircraft is finished in the Coastal Command anti-submarine scheme and carries the Coastal Command Station Number code '2'. Note the 'distinctive markings' outer white bands on the fuselage, thinly outlined in black. (via RCAF) ABOVE Spitfire HF Mk VII, MD111, NX•Q of No 131 Sqn., based at Culmhead, circa June/July 1944, in the High Altitude Day Fighter Scheme of Medium Sea Grey upper surfaces with PRU Blue undersides. Note the non-standard narrow width 'distinctive markings'. (B Robertson) OPPOSITE TOP Canadian-built Mosquito B Mk XXV, KB416, AZ•P of No 627 Sqn., Bomber Command, circa September 1944, with 'distinctive markings' under the fuselage. Although Bomber Command Mosquitoes were granted permission not to apply 'distinctive markings' on their aircraft, as No 627 Sqn was engaged in marking targets in daylight, they were required to carry them BOTTOM Whilst most of the other combat types were reducing the 'distinctive markings' on their aircraft from as early as July 1944, the photo reconnaissance aircraft of No 34 Wing, 2 TAF, were advised to re-apply them in full, following several 'friendly fire' incidents, as this Spitfire PR XI, PL775/A of No 541 Sqn., taken circa November 1944, shows. (via J Oliver)



Night Fighters

The concession that Night fighters were to be exempt from carrying the distinctive markings was revoked on 7 June by Message A-104 from HQ AEAF, to all concerned. The message stated that with effect from 8 June 1944, all AEAF Night Fighter and Intruder aircraft operating over or near the shipping lanes or assault area during the hours of daylight were to carry the distinctive markings laid down in SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23. It is thought that these instructions were authorised by SHAEF in Amendment No. 1 to Operational Memorandum No 23.

Whilst the whole purpose of the distinctive markings was that they should allow friendly aircraft to identify each other, there was no guarantee that they would work, especially if the enemy were to try applying them to his own aircraft as a ruse de guerre. This was apparently starting to happen within two days of the invasion as 11 Group's Operational Activity Synopsis for the Daylight phase of 8 June 1944 stated that Fw 190s had been seen bearing white stripes on the wings and fuselage similar to the special Allied markings. The synopsis then went on to state that, *"This did not fool 135 Wing who claim 7-0-7 for no loss"*.

Ruse de guerre or not, it would seem that identification of friendly aircraft remained difficult as the 11 Group Synopsis for the Daylight phase of 10 June 1944, remarked that this day was marked by the very numerous reports of attacks being carried out on RAF aircraft by other RAF aircraft. No 124 Wing reported that some of its aircraft had been fired upon by a lone Mustang wearing RAF markings; No 74 Sqn was engaged by two clipped wing Spitfires; No 315 Sqn was attacked successively by Thunderbolts, Mustangs and Spitfires; No 485 Sqn was persistently attacked by a Spitfire whilst No 3 Sqn was engaged by a formation of Spitfires whose attack was foiled by the Tempest's superior performance which allowed them to pull away from the attackers. Nor was the Fleet Air Arm immune, as No 885 NAS which was equipped with Seafires was attacked by a pair of Spitfires!

Whether these engagements were brought about as a result of rumours circulating that German aircraft were now also wearing identification stripes cannot be confirmed, but it would appear that some German aircraft might have been so marked. For example, on 13 June, two Sections each of four Mustangs of No 315 Sqn were airborne on 'Ramrod 995' when they encountered and destroyed, a Fw 190 which was described as having, *"...both wings painted with black and white stripes, a white nose and red and white stripes around the rear fuselage near the tail unit"*.

(Ed Note - Does any reader know if JG 6 were operating over Normandy on 13 June 1944 and if so is there any record of them applying black and white markings?)

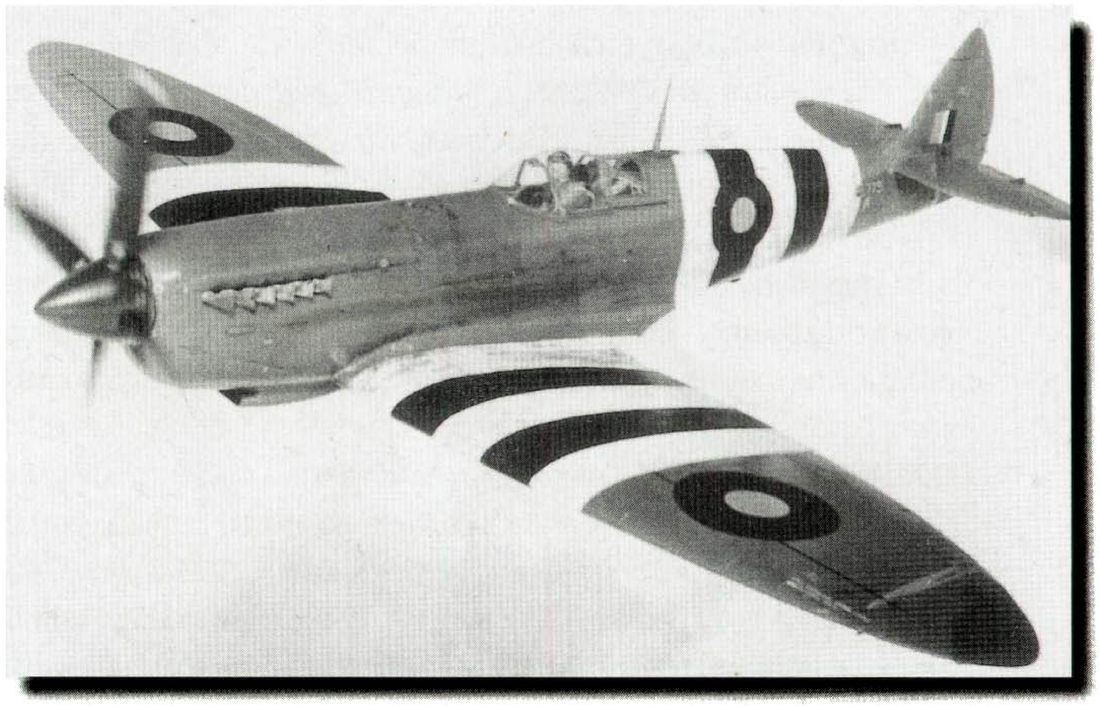
Reducing the distinctive markings

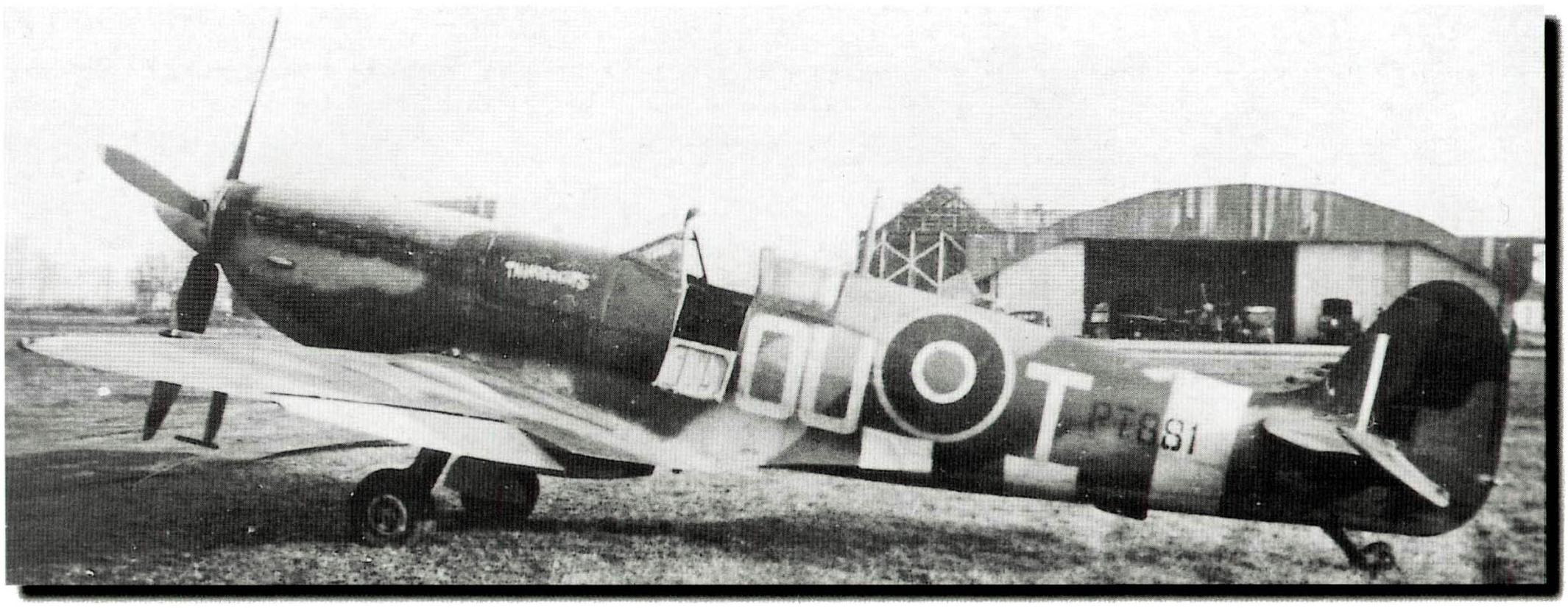
Following the beginning of 'Operation Overlord' with 'Operation Neptune' on 6 June, the distinctive markings then remained in place unchanged for about a month, but by 3 July, No 485 Sqn and the other constant squadrons of 135 Airfield were starting to scrape the markings off the upper surfaces of their aircraft.

On 6 July 1944, HQ AEAF recommended to SHAEF that no further aircraft should be given the distinctive markings and that those already applied should be allowed to fade out and not be renewed. If approval were to be given, it was requested that all Army and Navy commanders be instructed to inform everyone, especially gun crews, that henceforward they could expect to see friendly aircraft without the distinctive markings and that the absence of the markings could no longer be accepted as an indication that the aircraft were hostile.

Approval for this must have been given promptly, perhaps by telephone, as the same day saw HQ AEAF give permission for some aircraft to only carry the distinctive markings on their under surfaces. This measure is thought to have been originally primarily intended for the benefit of Air Observation Post aircraft which were proving difficult to conceal whilst on the ground at their forward bases when marked as specified by SHAEF Operational Memorandum 23. It is thought that the removal of the distinctive markings from the upper surfaces was authorised by SHAEF in Amendment No 2 to Operational Memorandum No. 23, which was effectively 'blanket permission' for any aircraft which required tactical camouflage to dispense with the distinctive markings on the upper surfaces. Thus for the period 6 July to 19 August 1944, the distinctive markings could be seen applied to the under surfaces only of the wings and fuselage.

By this time, one Bomber Command squadron had started to





carry the distinctive markings, No 627 Sqn of the Pathfinder Force which was by this time operating as Target Markers in daylight. Whilst their ORB makes no mention of the application of the distinctive markings it would appear that they were the only Bomber Command Squadron to do so as, by August, the squadron was marking targets in daylight regularly, expending nearly a thousand 100 pound smoke bombs during the month.

Further reductions

The next change in the distinctive markings came with the issue of Amendment No 3 to SHAEF Operational Memorandum 23, on 19 August 1944. This stated that the distinctive black and white marking would be removed from aircraft wings, but that the markings around the rear fuselage would remain. The period 25 August to 10 September 1944, was allotted for the removal of the markings. It was acknowledged that some units might experience some difficulty in removing these markings from their aircraft, especially on some wood and fabric surfaces, without damaging the structure and that as a consequence, the wing markings might still be found on some aircraft after 10 September.

A number of 'friendly fire' incidents featuring aircraft which carried the distinctive markings have already been mentioned, and with the progressive removal of the markings positive identification can only have been made more difficult, especially if too great a reliance were placed on the markings for identification. The problems of identification under these circumstances are perhaps illustrated by a 'friendly fire' incident which occurred on 2 October 1944.

A Mosquito of 34 Wing, 2 TAF was returning from an operational flight over Germany when it had the misfortune to encounter aircraft of the 366th Fighter Group which were providing cover for a bombing operation in the vicinity of Louvain. According to the surviving reports of this incident, the 336th FG flight leader observed the Mosquito approaching from an easterly direction and intercepted it, following it for some time in an up-sun position and closing to within 150 yards.

From this position, the American fighters were able to observe that, *"the aircraft looked like a Mosquito and was coloured an overall blue grey colour"*. However, they failed to discern the national markings and misidentified the individual aircraft identification letter 'K' on the fuselage as a German Cross.

Having made this misidentification, the flight leader manoeuvred into a firing position from where he shot the Mosquito down, killing both the crew. As no mention is made of whether the Mosquito was wearing the distinctive black and white markings, it must be assumed that it was not so marked as it is known that by this date aircraft were reaching squadrons without them.

Over the weeks following this incident, further moves were made by some parties to have the remaining distinctive markings removed altogether. When consulted on this matter, 2nd TAF replied to SHAEF on 21 November 1944, that they considered that all PR aircraft of 34 Wing should be painted with what are termed, *"standard invasion markings'"*, because of, *"recent unfortunate incidents where these aircraft have been attacked by other friendly aircraft which had in some cases resulted in some loss of life"*. It was not thought necessary that any other operational aircraft need be marked with anything other than the usual national markings.

On 6 December 1944, SHAEF circulated a letter headed 'Suspension of Operational Memorandum No 23' which stated that the provisions in SHAEF Operational Memorandum No 23 would be suspended from 31 December 1944. Except for the PR aircraft of No 34 Wing, 2 TAF, the distinctive markings were to be removed where this would be possible without damaging the aircraft and having due regard for the time and materials available for the work to be carried out.

All commanders were to ensure that all personnel under their command were to be instructed that if an aircraft of Allied manufacture was seen without distinctive markings, the absence of such markings did not necessarily indicate that it was hostile. Furthermore, Allied aircraft might be seen which still carried the distinctive markings and that under some lighting conditions faded striping might resemble the German cross.

The removal of the distinctive markings was in no way to affect the national markings which were in use at that time which would continue to be carried by aircraft. At the time of writing, no documentary evidence of, if or when, the markings were dropped by the PR aircraft of 34 Wing 2nd TAF has come to light. AM



TOP In August 1944, it was ordered that the 'distinctive markings' should be removed from all surfaces other than the undersides of the rear fuselage. Spitfire Mk IXe, PT881, OU•T of No 485 (NZ) Sqn., based at Maldegem, Holland, circa November 1944, appears to have complied with the order. Note the name 'Thunderguts' on the cowling side. (via K Wells) **ABOVE** Typhoon Mk Ib, MP149, I8•P of No 440 Sqn (RCAF), taxiing in at Eindhoven from another bombing sortie, circa October 1944. Note the 'distinctive markings' now under the rear fuselage only. Named 'Pulveriser II', MP149 was hit by flak and abandoned by its pilot over Malmedy on 25 December 1944. (via Canadian Forces)

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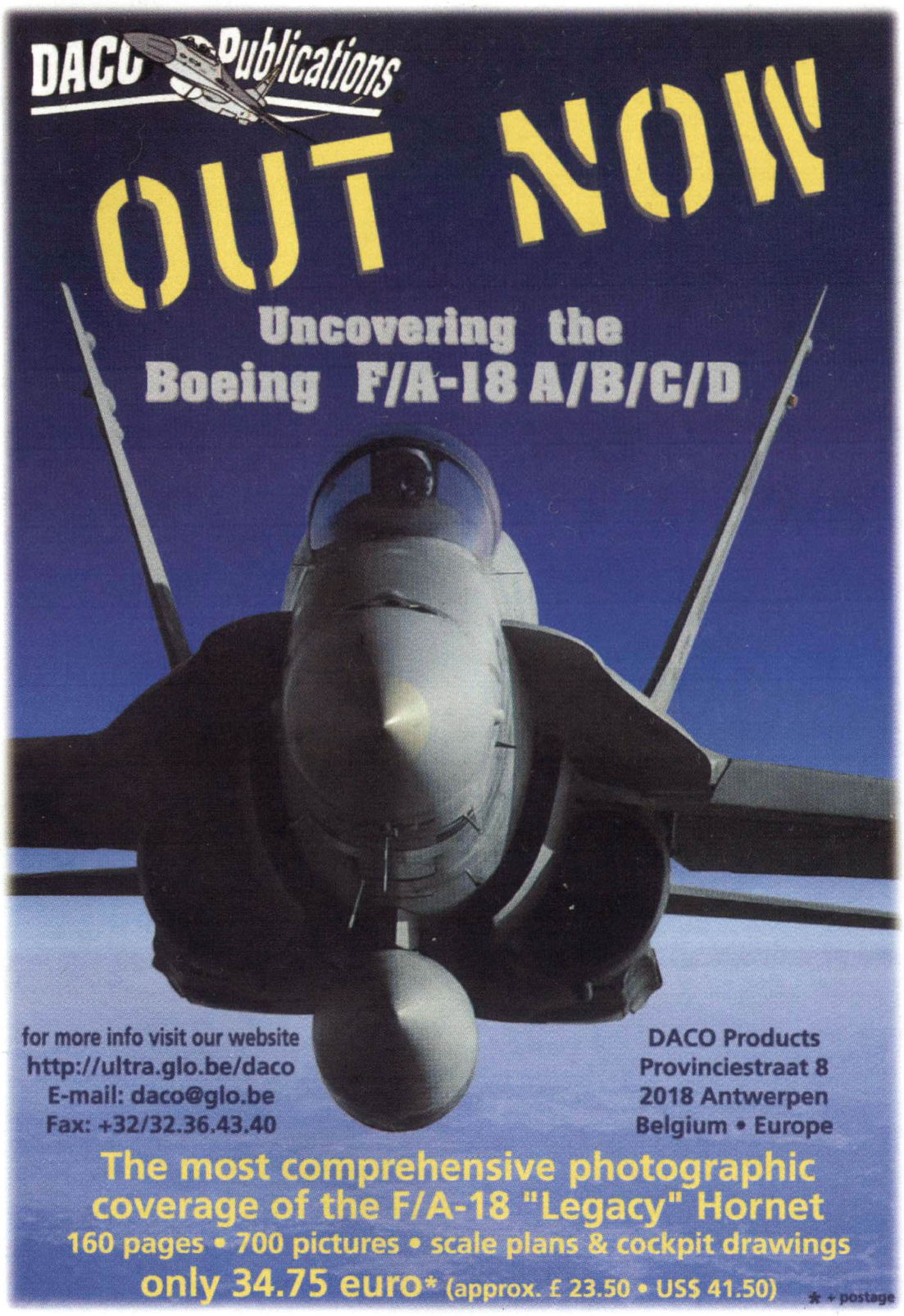
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800 NAS

1980 – 2004

John Hale gives a heartfelt farewell to No 800 Naval Air Squadron, with a hopeful look to the future

No 800 Naval Air Squadron, decommissioned at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton, on 31 March 2004, beginning the phase-out of the Sea Harrier FA.2 from service with the Royal Navy. Thankfully, No 800 NAS' time in limbo is to be mercifully short, as the Squadron will re-form in April 2006. However, this will be at RAF Cottesmore, and the squadron will fly an uprated version of the Harrier GR.7 currently in service with the Royal Air Force.

The first operational Sea Harrier squadron to be commissioned, on 23 April 1980, No 800 NAS was pitched into a hot war within two years of its formation when the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands came as a bolt from the blue. The squadron's motto, 'Nonquam non Paratus' - (Never Unprepared) - was never more appropriate. Flying from HMS Hermes, the squadron successfully brought down thirteen Argentine aircraft in air-to-air combat during the short war in the South Atlantic.

Denied the opportunity to score any more air-to-air kills since June 1982, the Squadron has nevertheless been kept extremely busy, taking part in warlike operations over Kosovo, Bosnia and Iraq during the past two decades.

Joint Force Harrier

Under the provisions of the Government's Strategic Defence Review of 1998, the Sea Harriers of the Fleet Air Arm were brought under the operational control of Royal Air Force Strike Command on 1 April 2000. Forming a part of Joint Force 2000, now Joint Force Harrier, the Harrier GR.7 and Sea Harrier FA.2 squadrons would be utilised as a package, making the best use of the individual capabilities of these aircraft. RAF Harriers would embark aboard the Invincible-class aircraft carriers of the Royal Navy paired with a Sea Harrier FA.2 squadron, to provide a Tailored Air Group able to deal with the assigned task.





The most noteworthy part of the SDR was the decision to construct two new conventional aircraft carriers for the Royal Navy. Referred to as the CVF, these would be highly capable ships of 50,000-65,000 tons with an Air Group of over forty fixed-wing aircraft. Whilst options were to be kept open, the front-runner for selection as the principal aircraft type is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, in its V/STOL variant. The first of these magnificent new ships, HMS Queen Elizabeth, is projected to enter service in 2012.

Harrier GR.9

Casting a dark shadow over this bright future for the Fleet Air Arm came the announcement by Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon in February 2002, that the Sea Harrier would be retired from service in 2006 - six years before the projected in-service date of the new carriers and their F-35 fighters. The premature retirement of the Sea Harrier has been extremely controversial. The plan is to withdraw the last Sea Harrier in March 2006, thereafter relying on the updated Harrier GR.9 to be flown by pilots of both Services when deployed aboard the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers. One of the RAF's three operational Harrier squadrons will be disbanded, whilst both 800 and 801 NASs will re-equip with the Harrier GR.9. The new Fleet Air Arm squadrons will be based at RAF Cottesmore alongside their light-blue compatriots; they will be smaller units with an establishment of only nine aircraft.

Utilising the specious arguments of obsolescence and the difficulties of installing an up-rated engine as justification, the removal from service of an aircraft type will produce great savings across the board, even though the Government deny that the exercise is a cost-saving measure. Particularly relevant is the greater simplification of embarked operations, as the aircraft carriers will only have to carry spare parts and armaments for one type of aircraft - and more importantly, trained crewmen to maintain them. Although the Harrier GR.7/9 and Sea Harrier FA.2 are both Harriers, they are really completely different aeroplanes. There is no commonality of parts and maintenance procedures whatsoever - well, they can both hover…….. and that's about it!

It is affirmed by the Government that all likely scenarios for the deployment of Joint Force Harrier require the ground-attack and interdiction qualities of the Harrier GR.7/9 in a power-projection role, rather than the air-defence capabilities of the Sea Harrier. We are reassured by the Government's statement that all future warlike operations will take place in concert with our Allies, who will provide the air defence for any Royal Navy task group on our behalf.

Exacerbating the situation further, is the indisputable fact that the Royal Navy's Type 42 Destroyers, which provide area air defence for the fleet with their Sea Dart missiles, are becoming increasingly aged. The ships from the first production batch are rumoured to be the target for early retirement as a cost-savings measure, leaving only eight, dedicated Air Defence guided-missile ships, to accompany any Task Group. The Invincible-class aircraft carriers have all lost their own Sea Dart missile systems, which were removed to provide additional deck space for parking the enlarged JFH air groups, and additional magazine space for their weapons. The first of the new Type 45 'Daring' class Destroyers optimised for air defence will not enter service until 2007 - assuming things proceed as planned

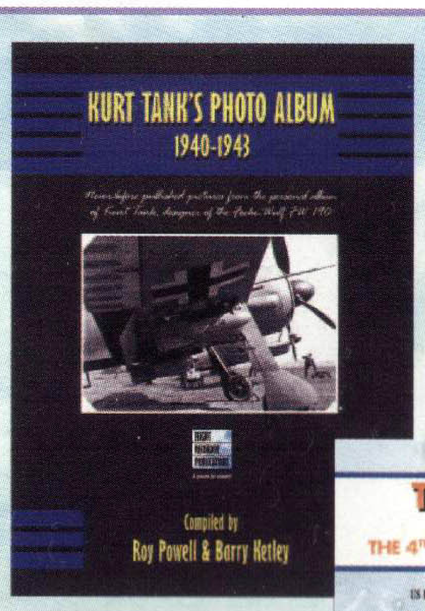
The early retirement of the Sea Harrier would appear to be a government exercise of 'crossing fingers and hoping for the best' - especially for a government that seems to have a taste for going to war! Whilst the Harrier GR.9 has some limited air-to-air capability, it lacks a radar and beyond-visual range missiles; and it even lacks a gun. One would think that the Falklands War had happened over 100 years ago, and not within the lifetimes of the politicians charged with protecting the interests of this country, let alone protecting the lives of those sailors, soldiers and airmen who may be sent into danger with a less capable air defence aircraft than that enjoyed by the Falklands Task Force in 1982!

Farewell

In a most welcome expression of squadron spirit, it was decided to apply a special colour scheme to one of its aircraft to commemorate the disbandment. A large representation of the crossed swords and trident from the Squadron badge on a red background is carried on the upper surfaces; red flashes are applied to both upper and under-surfaces of the tailplanes, and there are large red areas on the under surfaces of the wings. The strakes beneath the fuselage for the mounting of the 30mm Aden gunpods are also painted red.

ZD613 was chosen as the recipient, and the work was carried out at the beginning of March in the paintshop at Royal Naval Air Station, Yeovilton. The first publicity photographs taken by the Royal Navy Navy were of this aircraft carrying the code number 127; however, a re-coding took place shortly afterwards, it being thought appropriate that the commemorative aircraft should carry the code number assigned to the Commanding Officer. ZD613 was therefore coded 122 before the de-commissioning of the Squadron. AM

Ed Note:
Modellers will be delighted to learn that Model Alliance have just released a decal sheet, (in both 1/72 and 1/48 scales), depicting this aircraft. Please check for availability with the many trade advertisements in this issue.



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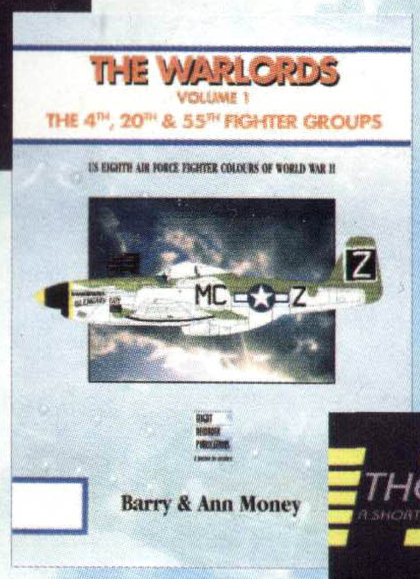
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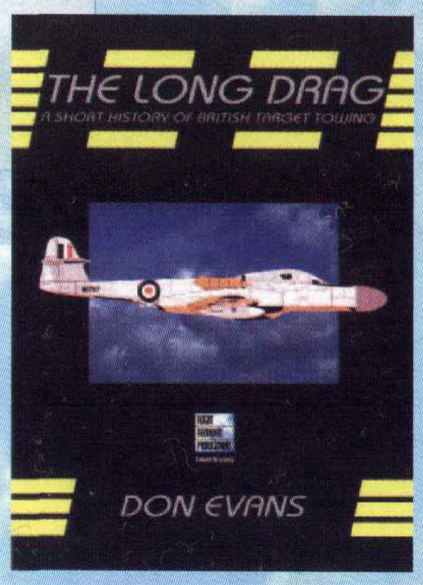
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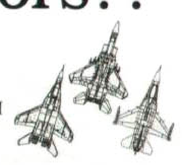
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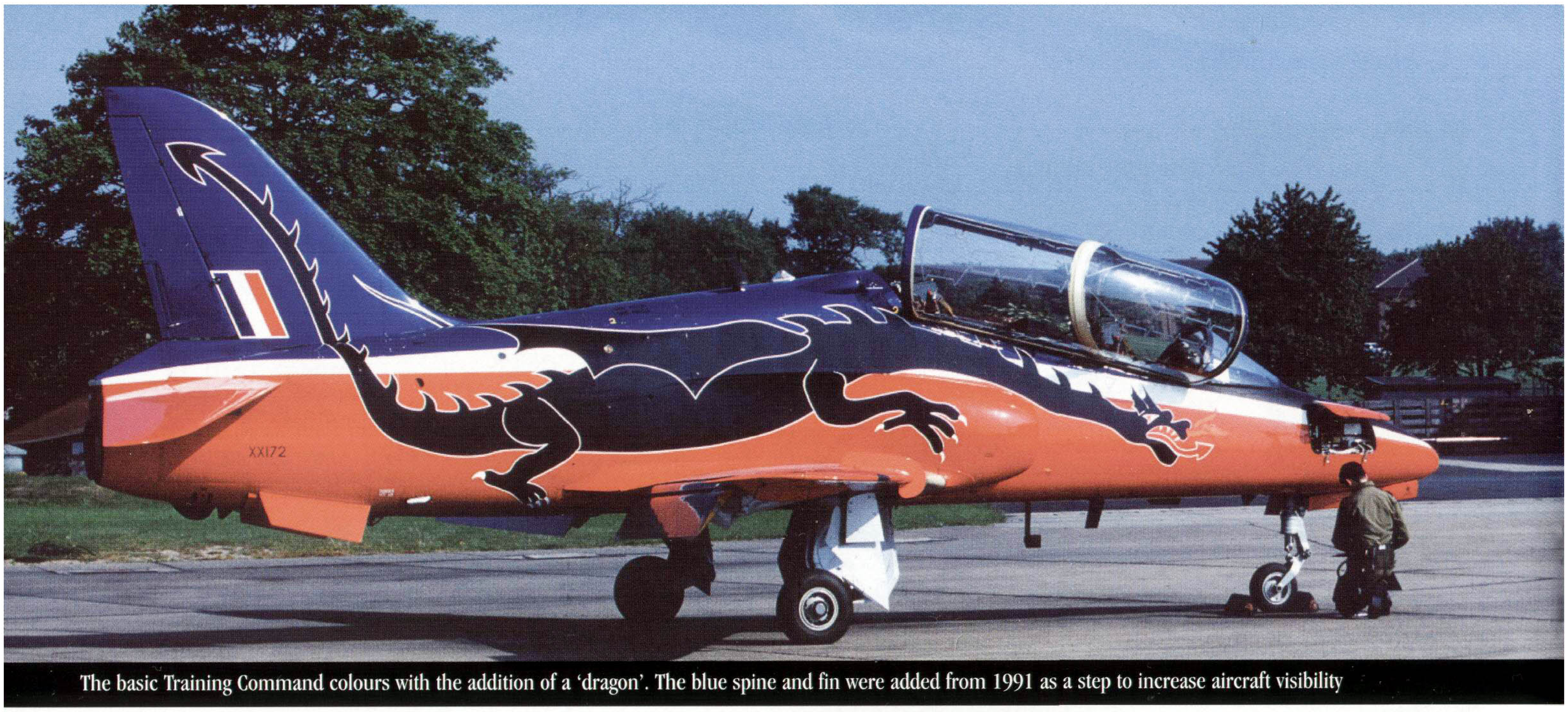
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The basic Training Command colours with the addition of a 'dragon'. The blue spine and fin were added from 1991 as a step to increase aircraft visibility

The Dragon & His Hawk

With the recent decal releases from On Target/Model Alliance, featuring several RAF Hawk training aircraft, Tom Ross thought that the accompanying images might provide an additional useful reference

XX172 WAS NO STRANGER TO FLAMBOYANT COLOURS. In 1988 it served as the display aircraft for the Central Flying School and was painted with a Union Jack on the fin running into a red cheat line all the way to the nose and a blue spine, but of less depth than shown in the accompanying photos here.

Later XX172 was to become part of the RAF St Athan Station Flight and used as a 'hack' to ferry pilots collecting or depositing aircraft to or from St Athan. It would also have been used to keep the unit test pilots current in flying hours. In May 1993 the 'dragon' was added to make XX172 one of the most striking RAF aircraft in history.

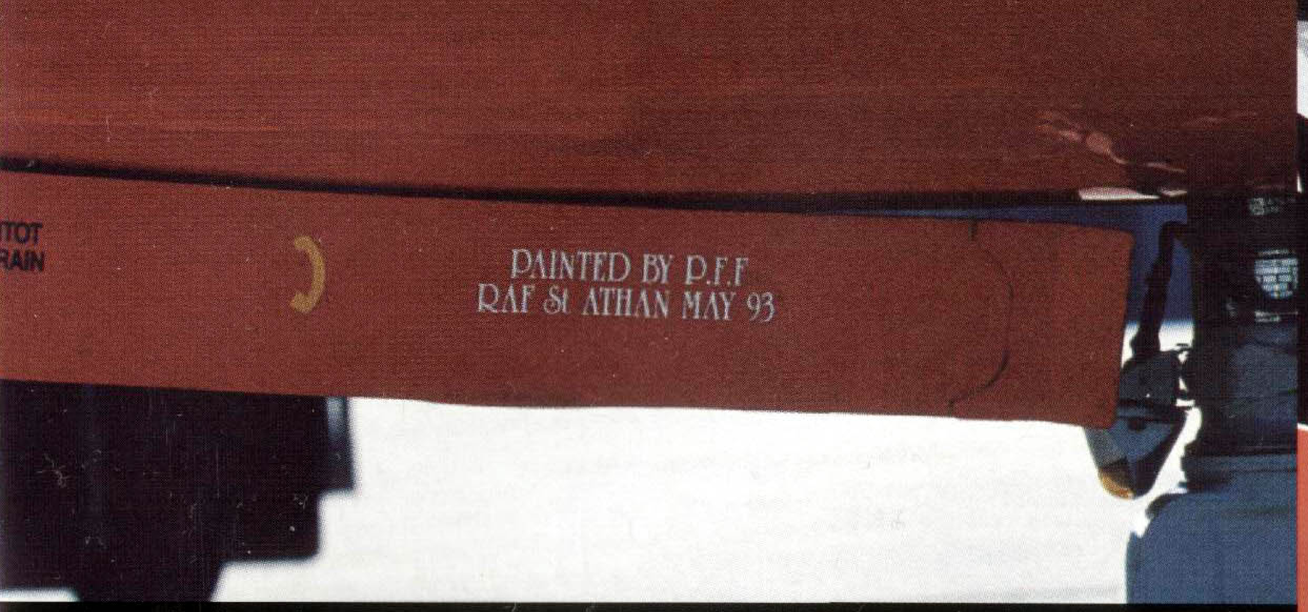
In 1994 the Hawk fleet began to be repainted overall gloss black as a result of enhanced visibility trials for training aircraft. By mid-1996, XX172 had been repainted overall gloss black with a newly designed 'dragon' - this time in red.

The accompanying photographs show XX172 at RAF Coltishall on 7 June 1993. AM



All photos by Tom Ross

Adding a sense of scale, the pilot fills in the necessary paperwork, using the wing as a desk, before his return to south Wales



The legend, PAINTED BY P.F.F, RAF St ATHAN MAY 93 was painted on both nosewheel doors. On the starboard door several of the letters/numerals were missing or damaged



The dragon's head. The matt black of the anti-glare panel butts up against the gloss dark blue of the upper fuselage where the windscreen and canopy meet



Note the chipped blue paint on the forward edge of the open canopy



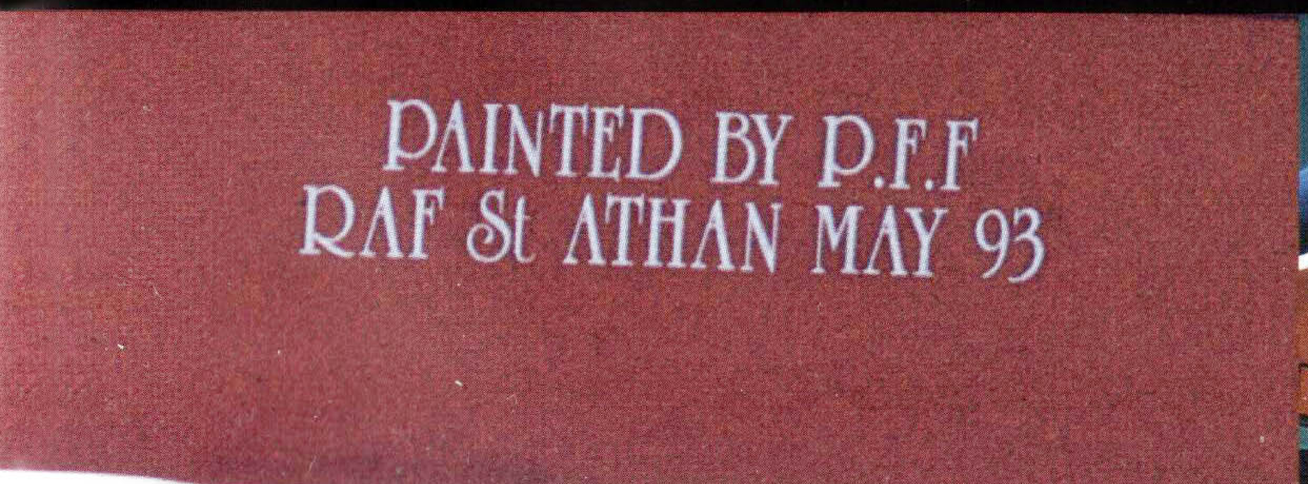
Close-up showing the style of lettering used for the crew details. It already shows signs of wear

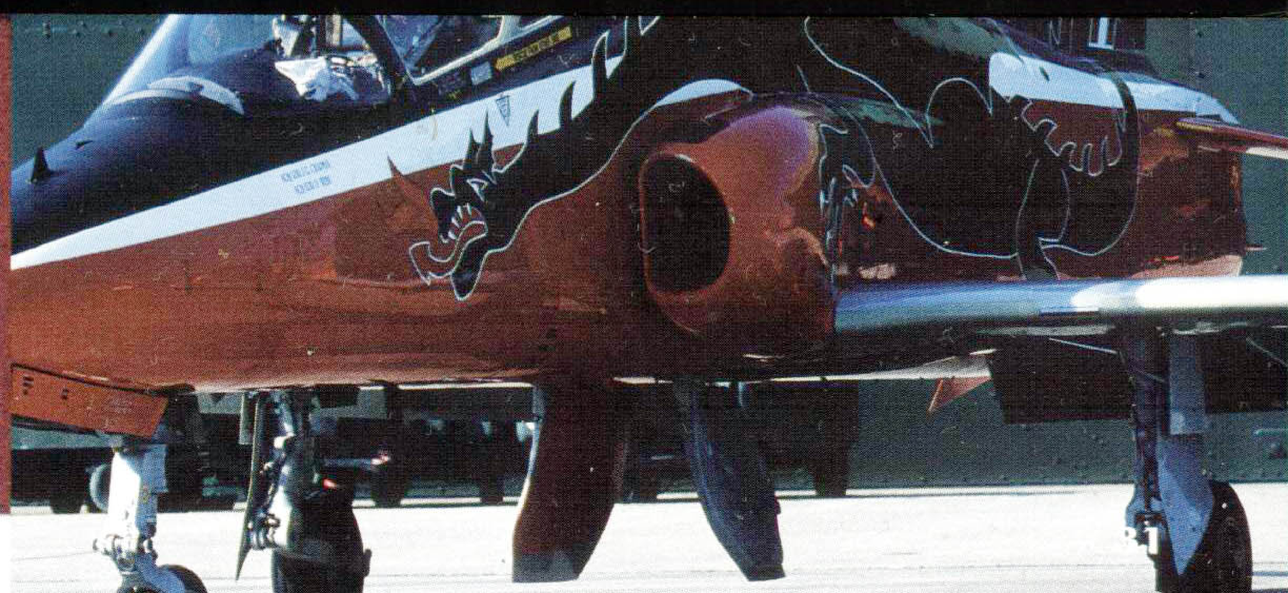


Overall, XX172, was very clean and tidy. Notice the rear fuselage contours below the fin. No fuselage roundels were carried, although these did make an appearance on the later black scheme, albeit not initiall.

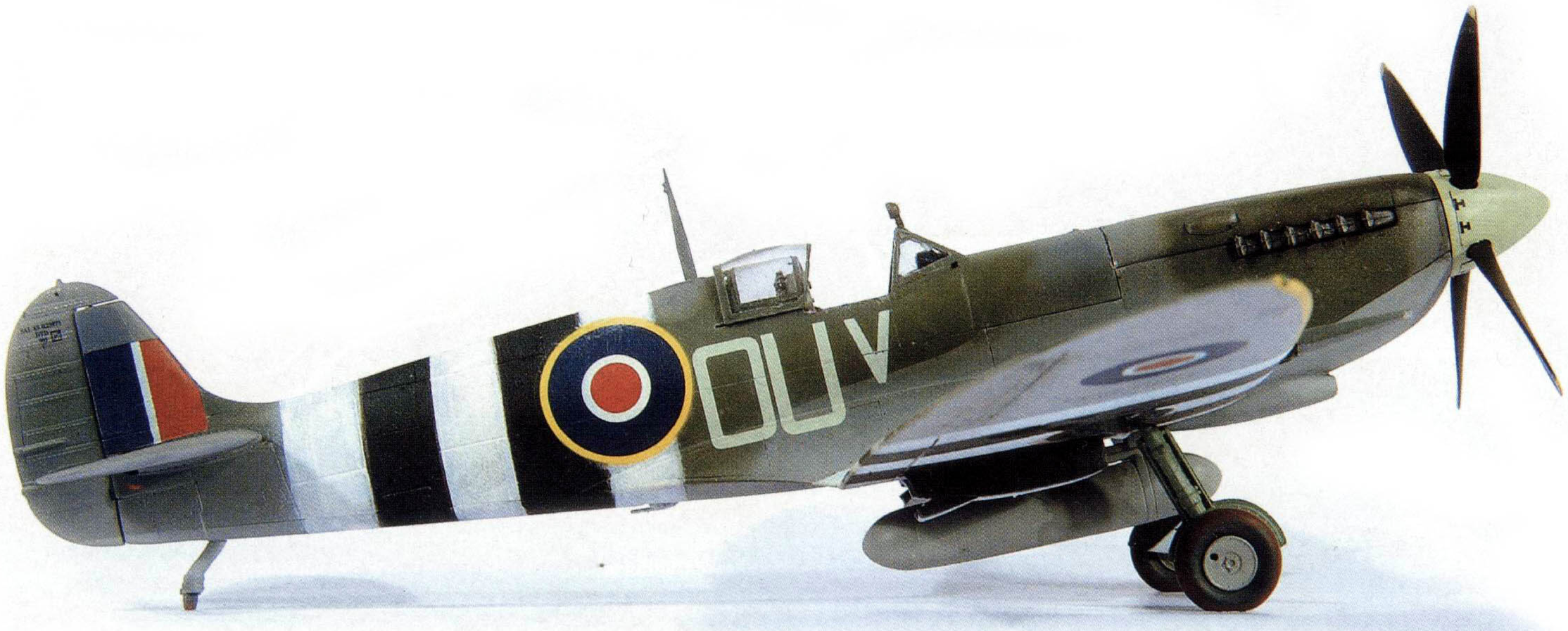
Beneath the windshield on the white stripe are the names:
SQN LDR J G CHAPMAN and SQN LDR D WEBB
These names were carried on both sides of the nose. Signs of paint chipping are evident on the edge of the engine air intake and on the intake behind the canopy. A 'zap' appears to have been placed on the inner port main undercarriage door, about a third of the way down near the front edge

Close-up of the nosewheel door showing the style of lettering





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D-Day Spitfire

Neil Robinson models ML407, Carolyn Grace's beautifully restored two-seater trainer Mk IX, as it looked on D-Day 6 June 1944

MY CONUNDRUM WAS SIMPLE: OF ALL THE MANY hundreds of Spitfires that were operational and involved in the D-Day invasion on 6 June 1944, which one should I choose to model for this 60th Anniversary commemorative feature? It had to be that *'little bit'* special, and perhaps not quite 'out-of-the-box' either, so what better aeroplane than Spitfire Mk IXe, ML407, which served with No 485 (New Zealand) Squadron, and when being flown by its regular pilot, Flying Officer Johnnie Houlton, shot down a Ju 88 on the afternoon of 6 June, to claim the first Supermarine Spitfire 'kill' of D-Day.

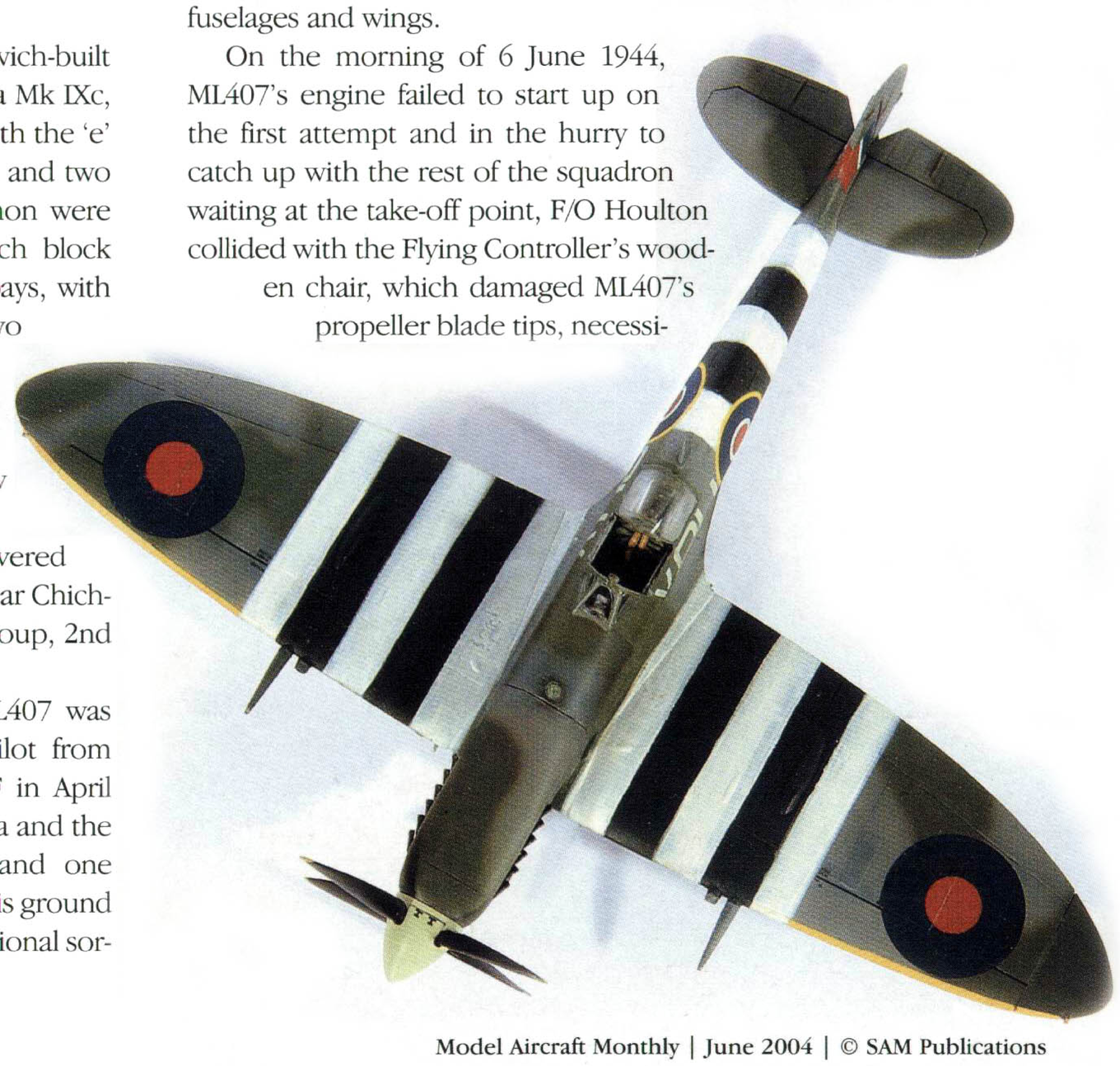
ML407 was a Merlin 66 engined, Castle Bromwich-built machine, completed in early April 1944, originally as a Mk IXc, but was then modified under 'a factory conversion' with the 'e' wing armament of two 20mm Hispano Mk V cannon and two 0.50 inch Browning machine guns. The 20mm cannon were mounted in the outer bays necessitating the breech block mechanism clearance blisters to be over the outer bays, with the 0.50 inch machine guns in the inner bays. The two outer 0.303 inch machine guns per wing were not fitted, although the access panels were retained with the cartridge case ejection chutes plated over, as were the leading edge machine gun ports. A (then) new computerised Gyro gunsight was also fitted.

ML407 was taken on charge by No 33 MU and delivered to No 485 (New Zealand) Squadron based at Selsey, near Chichester, an Advanced Landing Ground within No 84 Group, 2nd Tactical Air Force, on 29 April 1944.

Later on the following day, Sunday 30 April, ML407 was issued to F/O Johnnie Houlton, an experienced pilot from Christchurch, New Zealand, who joined the RNZAF in April 1941 and had flown Spitfires on operations from Malta and the UK, claiming two 'Confirmed', three 'Damaged' and one 'Shared' kill. The code letters OU•V were applied by his ground crew and Johnnie Houlton flew ML407 on forty operational sorties from 1 March until the end of August 1944, covering the whole of the D-Day period.

Immediatedly prior to the invasion, No 485 (NZ) Squadron had been heavily involved in dive-bombing attacks against *'Noball'* (V-1) sites, key road and major rail points in France, with 500lb bombs fitted on a rack under the fuselage centreline, but on the evening of 3 June, the Squadron was 'stood down' to allow the ground crews to bring the aircraft up to top line serviceability, and the black and white, Allied Expeditionary Air Force, (AEAF) 'distinctive markings' were applied around the fuselages and wings.

On the morning of 6 June 1944, ML407's engine failed to start up on the first attempt and in the hurry to catch up with the rest of the squadron waiting at the take-off point, F/O Houlton collided with the Flying Controller's wooden chair, which damaged ML407's propeller blade tips, necessi-











TOP On the eve of D-Day, Spitfire Mk IXe, MK732, OU•U in the foreground, with ML407, OU•V behind, probably taken on the morning of 4 June 1944, literally just after the 'distinctive markings' had been applied. The individual aircraft letters had not been added under the cockpits yet. Note the uneveness of the black and white stripes on the fuselage and the 45 gallon 'torpedo' drop tank. (Pat Patterson via Hugh Smallwood)

MID LEFT Flying Officer John Arthur 'Johnnie' Houlton, ML407's regular pilot in the early summer of 1944. This photograph was taken shortly after he shot down his second Messerschmitt Bf 109G, on 12 June 1944. Note the 'hard edged' camouflage demarcation under the cockpit compared with the 'soft-edged' sprayed demarcation by the pilot's head. (John Houlton via Hugh Smallwood)

MID RIGHT B Flight of No 485 Sqn., dispersed at Merville, France in September 1944. ML407 is in the foreground. (M A Collett via Hugh Smallwood)

BOTTOM ML407 photographed escorting Halifax and Lancaster bombers on a daylight raid to Homberg on 27 August 1944. By this time, the 'distinctive markings' had been 'tidied-up' and removed from the upper surfaces, 'revealing' the original individual aircraft letter on the rear fuselage and the serial number. Note the 45 gallon 'torpedo' drop tank. (Terry Kearins via Hugh Smallwood)

Spitfire Mk IX

1/72nd scale general arrangement drawing

© Mark Rolfe 2004

Wingspan: 36ft 10in (11.22m)

Spitfire Mk IXe front view

Spitfire Mk IXe upper view

Spitfire Mk IXe (late) port side-view

Spitfire Mk IXc underside

Height: 12ft 7.75in (3.85m)

Spitfire Mk IXc port side-view

Length: 31ft 0in (9.46m)

Spitfire Mk IXe starboard side view

Spitfire Mk IXe port side view

Spitfire Mk IXc upper view

Spitfire Mk IXc starboard side view

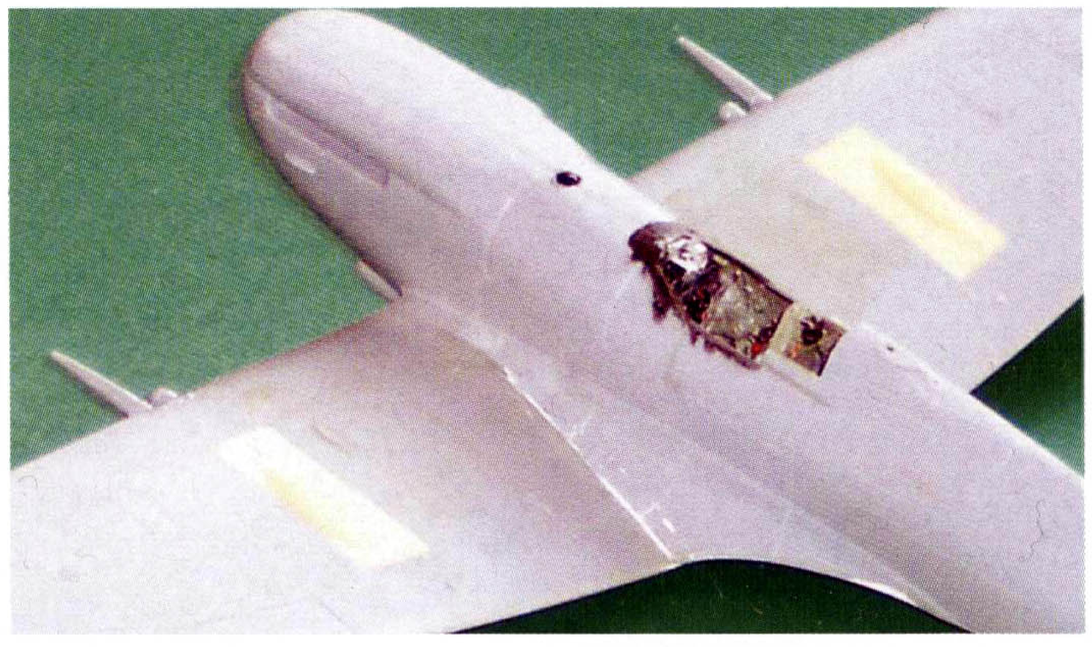
Spitfire Mk IXc front view

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tating a full propeller change, which kept the aircraft out of action until the afternoon.

In the mid-afternoon, F/O Houlton was leading Blue Section during the squadron's third patrol of the day, when he spotted a Ju 88 just above some clouds. A 45° deflection, three second burst from 500 yards, hit the Ju 88 in the starboard engine which caught fire. Two of the crew bailed out and the aircraft dived in to the ground blowing up on impact, to become the Spitfires' first 'kill' of D-Day!

During the ensuing weeks, F/O Houlton went on to destroy two Messerschmitt Bf 109s, on 8 and 11 June, and damaged a third on 29 June, before the pilot was sent for a well-earned 'rest' at the end of August. In December 1944, ML407 was transferred to No 341 (Free French) Squadron, the first of six squadron transfers the aircraft made up until the end of World War Two.



Modelling ML407

I chose to model ML407 from Hasegawa's 1/48 scale Spitfire Mk IXc (kit JT79), which created something of a furore when it was first released some two years ago. Rumours that its fuselage was undersize were proved true and what should have been heralded as the best 1/48 scale Spitfire Mk IX *ever*, was not to be. However, the fuselage length errors notwithstanding, it *is* still a beautiful kit.



Moulded in Hasegawa's usual mid-grey plastic with crisply engraved panel lines and delicately raised detail, the kit basically represents a late-series Mk IX airframe; but the Spitfire is a complicated creature and certain compromises have had to be made to enable Hasegawa to maximise on their tooling costs, to be able to produce a series of 'Mk VIII/IX' Merlin-engined Spitfires.

It would appear that Hasegawa's fuselage is short by some 3.5mm - mainly in the nose cowling area and immediately behind the cockpit. The rear fuselage is also a trifle shallow aft of the wing trailing edge fairing. However, when the kit is built up, these errors really don't appear obvious. The cowling top line profile is also a little 'flat', representative of an early Mk IX series machine, later series Mk IXs having one of at least three styles of 'bulged' cowling tops, so a bit of work with the filler could be called for here to rectify matters.

The cockpit has an excellent multi-part interior, (with curved floor bottom), that 'paints up' an absolute treat. Two types of gun sight are provided - the earlier Reflector and the later computerised Gyroscopic gun sight as fitted to ML407. All I added was some etch brass seat harnesses from the Adeco range marketed by Model Design Construction in the UK.

The crystal clear canopy comes in three separate parts; windscreen, hood - which is moulded thin enough to allow the canopy hood to be placed in the open position if desired - and rear fixed section. Two types of rearview mirror are offered, circular and oblong, (ML407 had the circular type), but do not fit the fuselage spine identification light, (part M7), as this was only a feature of earlier Marks of Spitfire.

The four-bladed propeller shape looks good as does the spinner with its separate back plate. An Aero Vee 'universal' carburettor intake is built in to the cowling underside halves, restricting modification possibilities somewhat, but there is a choice of tailwheel styles - fixed and retractable - for which alternative lower rear fuselage sections are provided. The retractable tailwheel is not applicable to the Mk IX of course and the parts are 'tinted-out' on the instruction sheet. The fixed tailwheel leg has a 'raised collar' where it meets the fuselage which needs carefully trimming off. On the real aeroplane, the leg passes straight in to the fuselage and is attached internally within the fuselage.

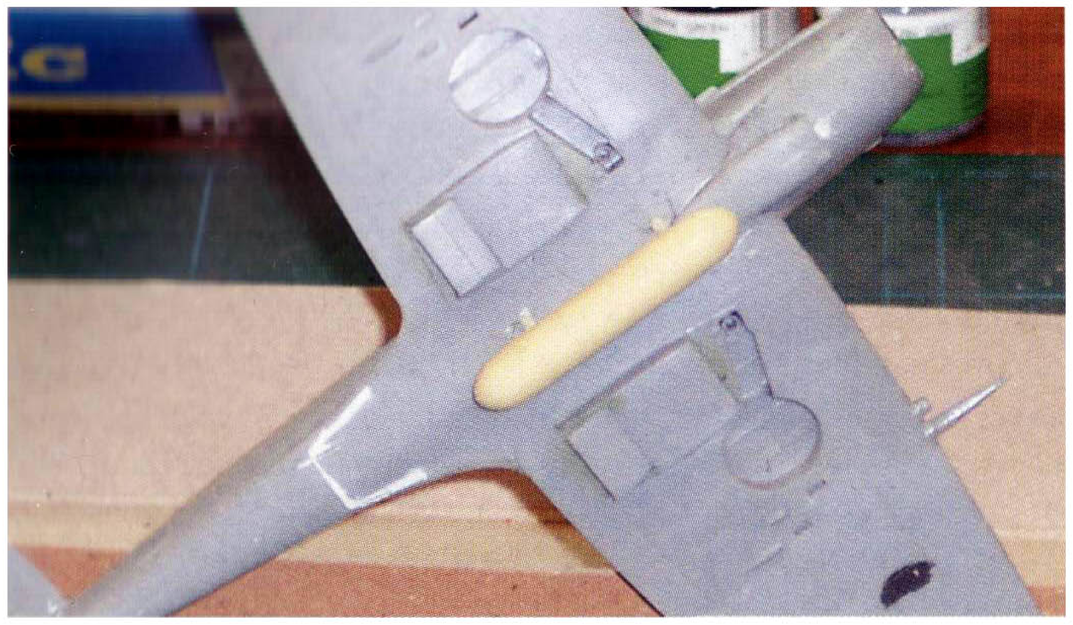
Alternative 'standard' and 'broad chord' rudders are provided, featuring some very fine ribwork, as does the extended 'double' horn balance elevator, and there is a very delicate rudder actuating cable for the port fuselage side.

Turning to the mainplanes, there doesn't appear to be anything wrong with the dimensions or outline shape, it is just in the detail where we encounter a few more *'kit compromises'*. Basically the mainplane is a 'c' armament wing, designed for two 20mm cannon and four 0.303 inch machine guns, with separate 'narrow' cannon blister panels.

The wings feature teardrop-shaped mainwheel tyre clearance blisters on the upper surfaces - a late/post-war modification to accomodate the slightly wider treaded tyres used on aircraft operating from metalled runways. Optional standard span and 'clipped' wing tips are given, with clear plastic navigation lights for the 'clipped' tips.

The nicely detailed undercarriage legs have separate, optional, forward facing suspension scissors, (fitted to many late-series Mk IXs, XVIs and the Mk VIII). If the choice of the earlier original internally sprung leg is chosen then the mainwheeel leg cover needs to be trimmed slightly and a small wedge shaped piece, (G27 which is provided), fitted to the front of each wheel bay - all of which is explained in the instructions.

Three types of wheel hub are provided for the separate tyres - 'three-indent', 'four-indent' and 'solid', and there are three types of 20mm cannon barrels - 'long' for the standard Mk IXc; 'short' for the Mk IXe; and anoth-



er 'short' style variation with a longer protruding barrel. Mk IXc outer cannon bay wing leading edge stubs and Mk IXe/XVI 0.50 inch inner cannon bay machine gun ports are also included.

The separate underwing radiators are nicely detailed with front and rear grilles and temperature control flaps, and there is a pair of underwing bomb racks, with separate sway braces, and a pair of six-part 250lb General Purpose bombs, which are very useful items - *for fitting to other manufacturers' models as well!*

'Circular' and 'square' exhaust stack manifolds are included, which are thoughtfully designed to be fitted after all the exterior painting is completed. The kit also features a 'Coffman starter bulge' on the starboard lower cowling side which will need to be carefully removed and sanded smooth if you're modelling ML407, as many later Mark Merlin-engined Spitfire cowlings didn't feature this teardrop shaped blister.

General construction should pose no problems to the average modeller, everything fits together perfectly without the need for any filler at all - a fine tribute to the expert mould-makers at Hasegawa. Some of the decal choices in the various boxing releases are a bit 'controversial', but as I was using after-market decals for my model it didn't affect me directly.

So, basically, what could have been THE ultimate 1/48 scale Mk IX kit, has been rather fatally compromised by the fuselage length error. It is virtually impossible to correct - even with major surgery. Thankfully, it doesn't appear *that* noticeable, and I suspect that all but the most scale accuracy conscious modellers will be happy to 'live with it'. Those that cannot, may be relieved to hear that Brigade Models have recently released a corrected, injection-moulded, replacement nose, *and also* a twin-seat injection-moulded fuselage conversion set, to fit the Hasegawa kit, which will enable modellers to build ML407 as she looks today! *Nice one Kevin!!*

Modelling ML407 on D-Day

Having suitably modified the Hasegawa kit up to a point to represent a 1944 standard Spitfire Mk IX, I now needed to make some specific modifications to my model to reproduce it as ML407 looked on D-Day.

As ML407 was a Mk IXe, the first job was to represent the correct wing armament of two 20mm cannon and two 0.50 inch machine guns. The kit's cannon blister panels, (parts 13 and 14), need to be replaced with the specially commissioned *'Model Aircraft Monthly'* 'D-Day Spitfire Resin Conversion Set' cannon blister panels, with the teardrop shaped fairing in the outer bay position. Then the short cannon barrels, (part 30), should be glued to the *outer* wing leading edge cannon port with the 0.50 inch machine gun fairings, (part 33), glued to the *inner* wing leading edge cannon port.

Ed Note: We are fully aware that Hasegawa have actually produced a dedicated Spitfire Mk IXe kit, but it appears to be currently out of production and was always relatively difficult to obtain anyway, (in the UK at least). So, whilst we were commissioning the the 45 gallon 'torpedo' drop tank, we decided to 'throw in' the 'e' wing cannon blisters too.

Photographs of ML407 during the immediate D-Day period and beyond, show it fitted with the 45 gallon, 'torpedo shaped' drop tank, again provided in the *'Model Aircraft Monthly'* 'D-Day Spitfire Resin Conversion Set'. The separate rack for this should first be superglued in place just infront of the forward pair of small 'lugs' on the fuselage centreline virtually on a level with the rear of the carburettor intake fairing. This will allow the rack's rear mounting brackets to clear the centreline identification light. The 45 gallon, 'torpedo shaped' drop tank can then be attached to the rack at any convenient time in the subsequent painting procedure.

Mainwheel hubs were the 'flat' disc type, (part 7), and the 'square style' ejector exhaust manifolds, (parts 15 and 16), were fitted as standard.

Painting

ML407 was finished in the then standard RAF Day Fighter Scheme of Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces in the A Scheme pattern with Medium Sea Grey undersides. I am a fairly recent 'convert' to water-based acrylic paints, and took this opportunity to try out some of the new 'Aircraft Colors' range from Miami, Florida, USA.

Following an overall coat of 6113 Medium Sea Grey, which acted as a primer/base coat too, the under surfaces of the model were masked out, within a couple of hours, and a coat of 6112 Ocean Grey was applied.

Photographs of the real ML407 appear to show it with a 'sprayed' Dark Green camouflage pattern, with the exception of an area under the cockpit which may have been 'touched-up' with a paint brush. Aiming for an 'authentic-as-possible' finish, the upper surface A Scheme camouflage pattern was sprayed on in 6111 Dark Green, with the area under the cockpit dutifully hand-brush-painted on.

No problems were encountered with the 'Aircraft Colors' acrylic paint, sprayed or brush-painted, it

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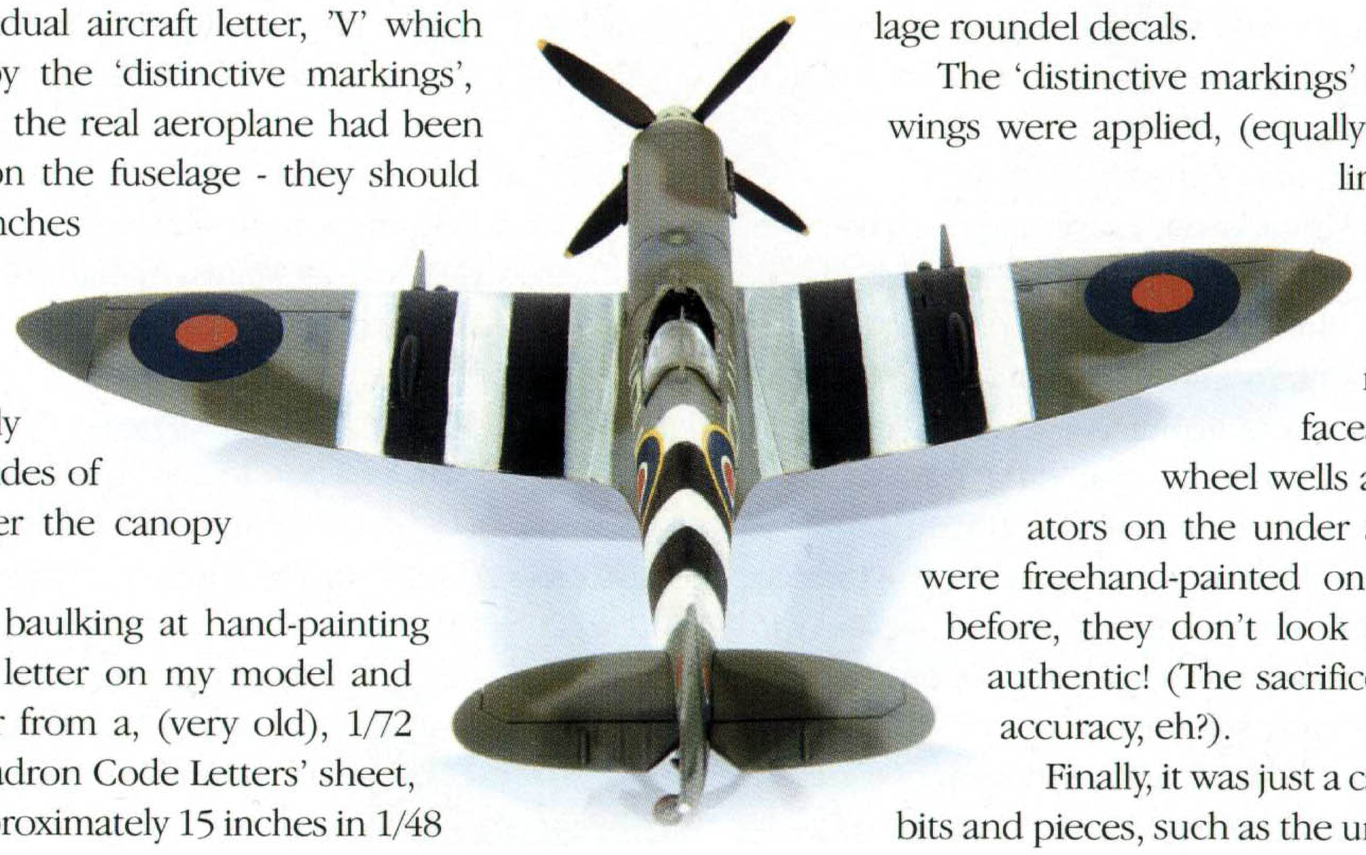


went on beautifully, and dried literally within minutes to a smooth matt finish with just a hint of a sheen. Pity I had to cover it with gloss varnish prior to applying the decals as the finish is 'scale perfect' - but there you go!

Along with the other Spitfires in the Squadron, ML407 had the black and white 'distinctive markings' applied, probably on the morning of 4 June. These 'invasion stripes' were rather crudely painted on and obscured the 18 inch wide, Sky, Fighter Command tail band, the serial number and the individual aircraft letter 'V', which was positioned to the rear of the fuselage roundel on both sides.

Prior to painting the camouflage scheme on the model, I had roughly masked out the areas where the 'distinctive markings' were to go, of which more later.

The aircraft's individual aircraft letter, 'V' which had been obscured by the 'distinctive markings', (which incidentally, on the real aeroplane had been applied too far back on the fuselage - they should have been started 18 inches *infront* of the tailplanes), was later reapplied, albeit again somewhat crudely and smaller, on both sides of the fuselage just under the canopy hood area.



I have to admit to baulking at hand-painting this individual aircraft letter on my model and used a Sky code letter from a, (very old), 1/72 scale Almark 'RAF Squadron Code Letters' sheet, which scaled out at approximately 15 inches in 1/48 scale. Perfect!

The squadron codes 'OU' came from Xtradecal sheet XO23-48 'RAF Squadron Code Letters and Numbers 24" and 30" - Sky'. As the serial number was overpainted by the 'distinctive markings', that was one decal application exercise I didn't have to bother with.

In fact I could have saved myself a lot of 'pain and anguish' if I had remembered that AeroMaster had released two decal sheets in early 2003, which featured ML407 - in two periods of its service life! Sheet 48-580 has markings for ML407 as she looked circa August/September 1944 with reduced 'distinctive markings', and sheet 48-581 features decals for Ml407 as she looked on D-Day - exactly what I wanted! What made it even worse is the fact that I had got both sheets in my decal box! Aaaargh! May I recommend to anyone contemplating modelling ML407 in 485 Squadron markings, to utilise one of these AeroMaster sheets?

Most of the decals I used, including all the roundels, fin flashes and stencilling, came from the Hasegawa kit, and were applied using Micro Sol and Micro Set. All settled down really well without any slivering with the exception of the upper wing roundels - which 'crinkled' and 'crazed' for some inexplicable reason. Serves me right I suppose, I should have remembered that I had got the AeroMaster decal sheets! Incidentally, has any other reader experienced this 'problem' with Hasegawa decals and Micro Sol and Micro Set?

Still with an 'authentic-as-possible' finish in mind, once the masking had been removed, I hand brush-painted on the 'distinctive markings', using a 3/16 inch 'chisel' brush. They don't look particularly neat, but there again, neither did the originals. I have no doubt that on the evening of the 3rd and/or morning of the 4th June, these stripes were painted on by the overworked ground crew, in great haste, thinking that the early hours of 5 June was going to be D-Day. They didn't have to look perfect, as long as they gave the right impression.

It is interesting to note though, that following the first few days of 'Operation Overlord', many photographs of aircraft carrying these black and white 'distinctive markings' appear to get neater; presumably as the individual aircraft were rotated around for servicing, a little extra time was spent on the 'distinctive markings' to tidy them up?

The 'distinctive markings', were painted around the fuselage roundels on the real machine, and I masked out the area where the fuselage roundel decals were to go on the model, and, as mentioned previously, freehand-painted the 'distinctive markings' on, (as per the real aircraft), prior to applying the decals. This created a very thin realistic 'surround' to the fuselage roundel decals.

The 'distinctive markings' on both surfaces of the wings were applied, (equally crudely), roughly on a line with the inboard edge of the aileron and ran all the way to the fuselage/wing root on the upper surfaces and over the main-wheel wells and the underwing radiators on the under surfaces, and these too were freehand-painted on my model. As I said before, they don't look too neat, but they are authentic! (The sacrifices we have to make for accuracy, eh?).

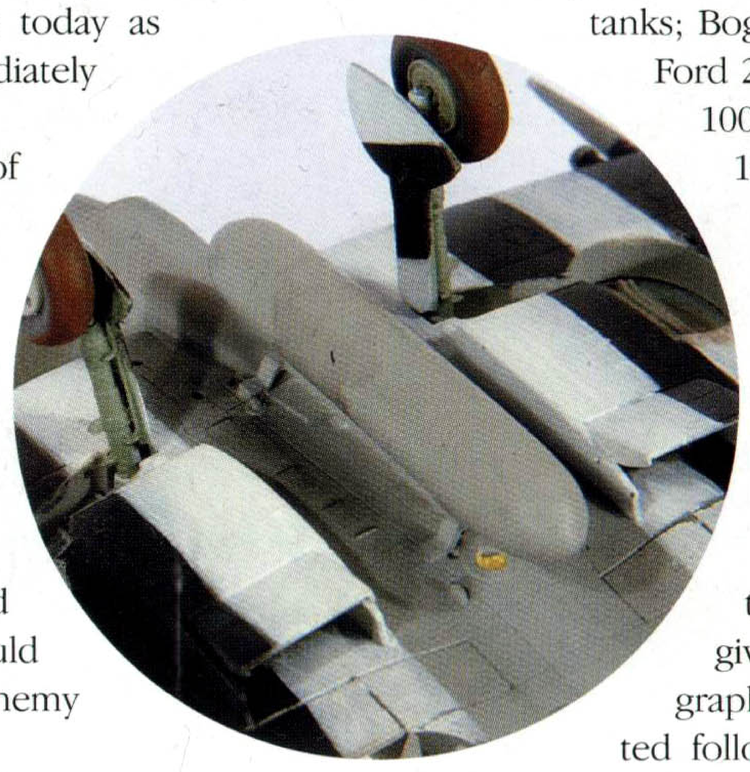
Finally, it was just a case of adding all the final bits and pieces, such as the undercarriage, aerial mast and rear view mirror that would have run the risk of being knocked-off during the painting and decalling stages, and last but not least, fitting the 45 gallon torpedo shaped drop tank into place. AM



The Spitfire 45 gallon 'torpedo' tank

AMONGST THIS MONTH'S 'MODEL AIRCRAFT MONTHLY' readers' exclusive resin offer, is a 45 gallon 'torpedo-shaped' Spitfire drop tank. *Paul Lucas* explains the origins behind this modified Typhoon drop tank that was fitted to so many RAF Spitfires from the summer of 1944 onwards.

This tank, and its associated rack which were jettisoned together incidentally, was basically a standard 45 gallon Typhoon/(Hurricane) tank which was modified for use on the Spitfire because of a shortage of the correct type of 45 gallon 'shaped tank', (colloquially known today as 'slipper tanks'), during the period immediately prior to D-Day



Headquarters 11 Group, Air Defence of Great Britain, (HQ ADGB), raised the question of the supply of 45 gallon drop tanks for Spitfires engaged in 'Operation Overlord' at a Group Commanders' conference held at HQ ADGB on 24 February 1944. Whilst there were adequate stocks of the 30 gallon 'shaped tanks' it was thought that there would be a massive increase in demand for the larger 45 gallon type which would allow the Spitfires to range deeper into enemy territory.

The Air Ministry therefore made enquiries amongst the operational commands as to what their requirements for 45 gallon tanks would be, requesting this information from HQ Allied Expeditionary Air Force, (HQ AEAF), by signal ZA.654 on 4 March 1944.

In their reply on 24 March 1944, HQ AEAF, stated that they would require 17,712 Spitfire 45 gallon tanks but understood that only 2,800 'shaped tanks' were available of which 2,300 were earmarked for the Mediterranean Air Force. HQ AEAF therefore requested that this allotment be cancelled or at least deferred until supplies were projected to increase in July and that the most urgent action be taken to supply the balance of their 45 gallon tank requirement in the form of 15,000 Typhoon 45 gallon tanks along with their racks and fittings at as early a date as possible and certainly no later than the beginning of May.

At that time ADGB held 1321 Typhoon tanks, complete with adapters, and needed 2,000 more by the end of April. The company which manufactured the adapter had 2,000 adapters on order which were being delivered at the rate of 500 per week. It would appear that the racks would pose the biggest production problem as adequate production facilities for Typhoon tanks appear to have been available.

At about this time in a letter to HQ ADGB, 11 Group stressed that every effort should be made to supply as many of the 'shaped tanks' as possible as these were quicker and easier to fit than the modified Typhoon tanks and their racks, thus ensuring a rapid turn around between sorties whilst avoiding the complications of the racks and other fittings required by the modified Typhoon tanks.

Exactly what action was taken remains unclear, but by the time that 11 Group's Administrative Instructions for 'Operation Overlord' were circulated on 27 May 1944, arrangements had been made for supplies of Spitfire 45 gallon drop tanks to be laid down at the Stations, Satellites and Advanced Landing Grounds listed below. It should be appreciated that these were target figures which owing to shortage of supplies might not have been achieved by D-Day.

Tangmere 3000 tanks; Merston 1350 tanks; Selsey 1350 tanks; Bognor 1300 tanks; Appledram 1350 tanks; Ford 2300 tanks; Shoreham 500 tanks; Friston 1000 tanks; Deanland 1350 tanks; Chailey 1350 tanks; Horne 1350 tanks; Lee on Solent 450 tanks; West Malling 50 tanks; Lympne 1500 tanks; Newchurch 550 tanks; Detling 1350 tanks;
Gatwick 1648 tanks and Manston 200 tanks. Added together, this comes to a total of 21,998 45 gallon tanks!

Unfortunately, it is not known how many of these were modified Typhoon tanks with their associated racks, but given the frequency with which photographs of Spitfires show these tanks to be fitted following D-Day, it would appear that the modified Typhoon tanks were by far the majority.

It is interesting to note that Squadrons equipped with Griffon-engined versions of the Spitfire had first call on the 'shaped' 45 gallon tanks as the modified Typhoon tanks and racks displayed poor jettisoning characteristics on these types of Spitfire, often hitting the oil cooler whilst leaving the aircraft. This presumably accounts for the fact that the modified Typhoon tank and rack is only ever seen fitted to Merlin-engined versions of the Spitfire. AM

1/48th Scale
D-Day Spitfire
Resin
Conversion Set

Includes: 45-gallon 'torpedo' tank and rack; 'e' wing cannon blisters; beer-barrel kegs



The second limited edition Resin Conversion Set available exclusively from SAM Publications.
To obtain your set, at £7.50 + p&p, please call the SAM hotline on **08707 333373** or order online at **www.sampublications.com**
Set number M480604002

Modification XXX

Graham Green describes how he built 'Johnnie' Johnson's, beer keg-carrying, Spitfire Mk IXe, JE•JJR

I HAD WANTED TO MAKE A SPITFIRE Mk IX FOR SOME time. I was looking for a suitable subject, 'something different', when I stumbled upon a small picture of a Mk IXe, MK329, coded JE•JJR that was flown by Wg Cdr 'Johnnie' Johnson which was certainly different.

It had full D-Day stripes on the fuselage and wings and was fitted with bomb racks that were used, on occasion, to carry beer barrels from the UK to a forward airstrips in France. Now that was different and the subject appealed to me so with those things in mind and a search for beer barrels of the right size the project took off.

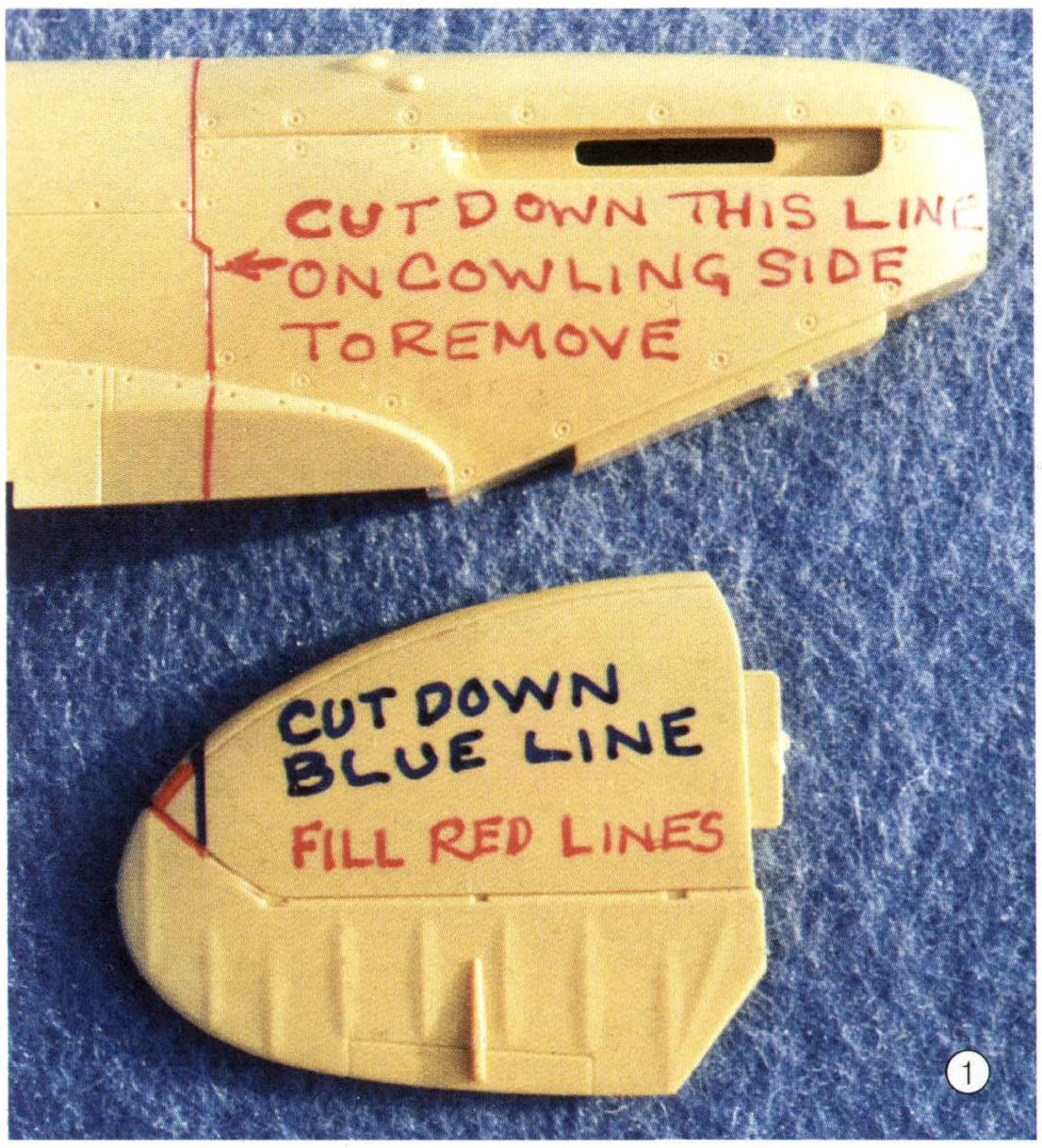
I used the Hi-Tech Mk IX Conversion Set to convert the Tamiya Spitfire Mk Vb, but it is also possible to use the Aeroclub or the Brigade Models Mk IX nose, or even cut the nose off an Arii/Otaki/(Airfix) kit and use the Airwaves wing conversion to get the same result. Additional detail was incorporated into the model in the form of detailed cockpit and dropped flaps to show the latter's rib arrangement and the actuation rod pushing up the door on the top of the wing.

Fuselage

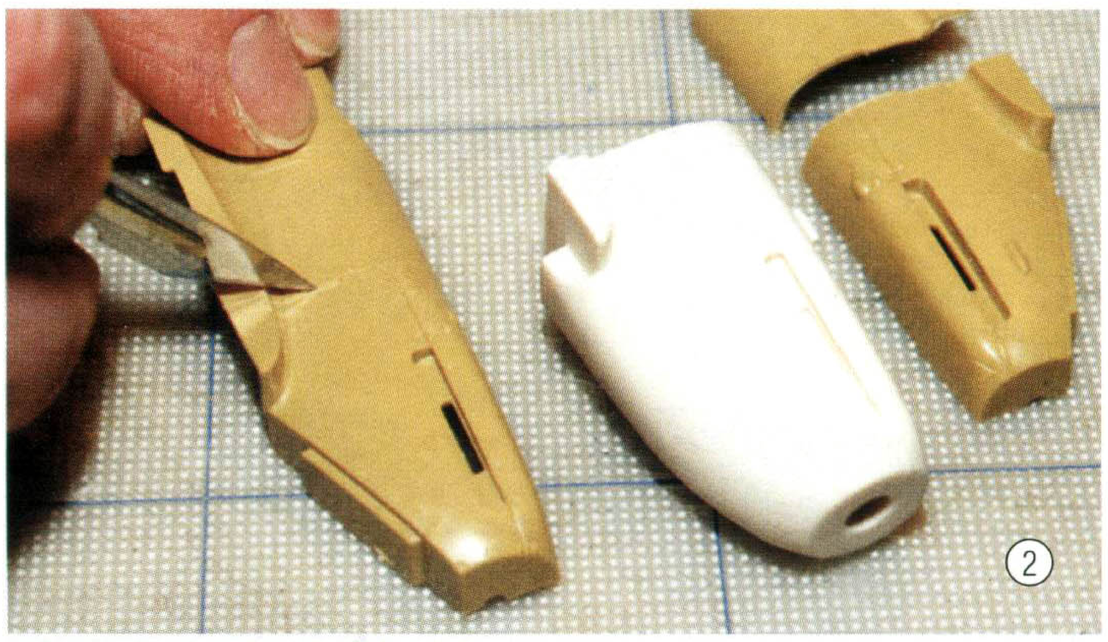
Starting with the fuselage, the original kit nose needs to be cut off along the vertical 'kinked' panel line which is where the main firewall is on the full size aircraft, shown by the red line in Photo **1**. I found the easiest way to remove the kit nose was to use several strokes of a scalpel blade until the part breaks away, see Photo **2**.

Dry-fitting of the Hi-Tech nose to the fuselage halves is necessary to ensure a good fit. Dry-fitting the wing to the fuselage and nose is also recommended at this stage to see if the wing roots will join correctly. There should not be a problem, but it is still wise to do a dry run and double check whenever you are fitting a third-party part.

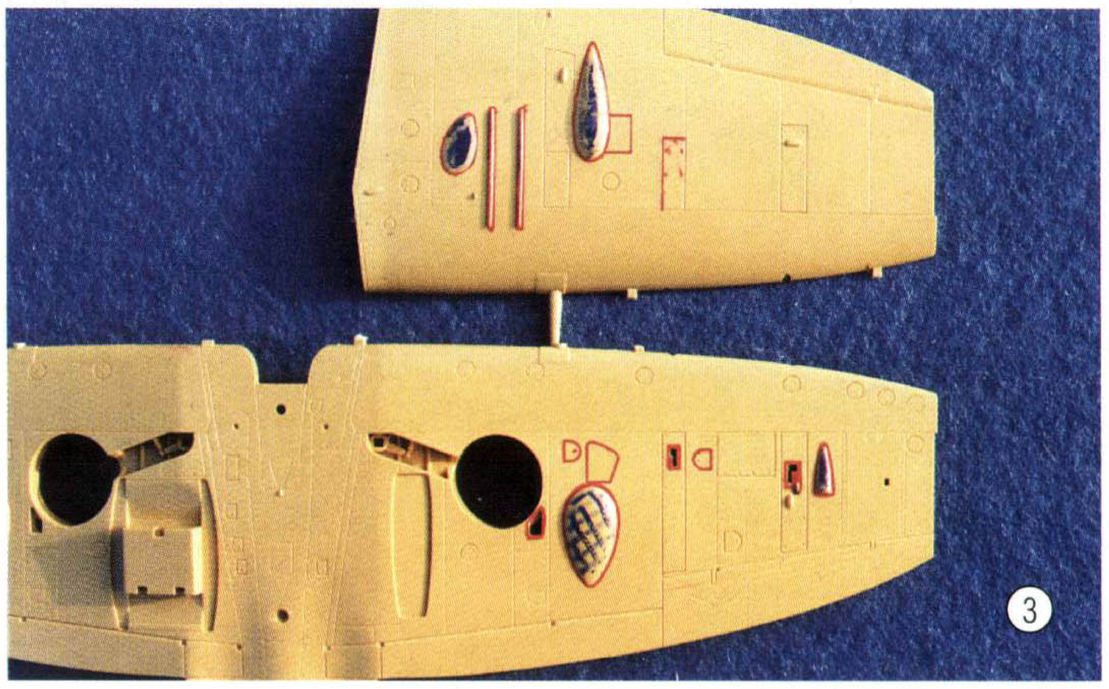
There was need to recontour the top of the Hi-Tech resin nose as viewed from the side to recreate the slight 'bulge', then dip as it reaches the rear of the cowling to accommodate the intercooler of the two stage Merlin 60 series engine. This was achieved by using car filler, applied sparingly, to the top of the resin nose piece and then carefully sanding to the correct



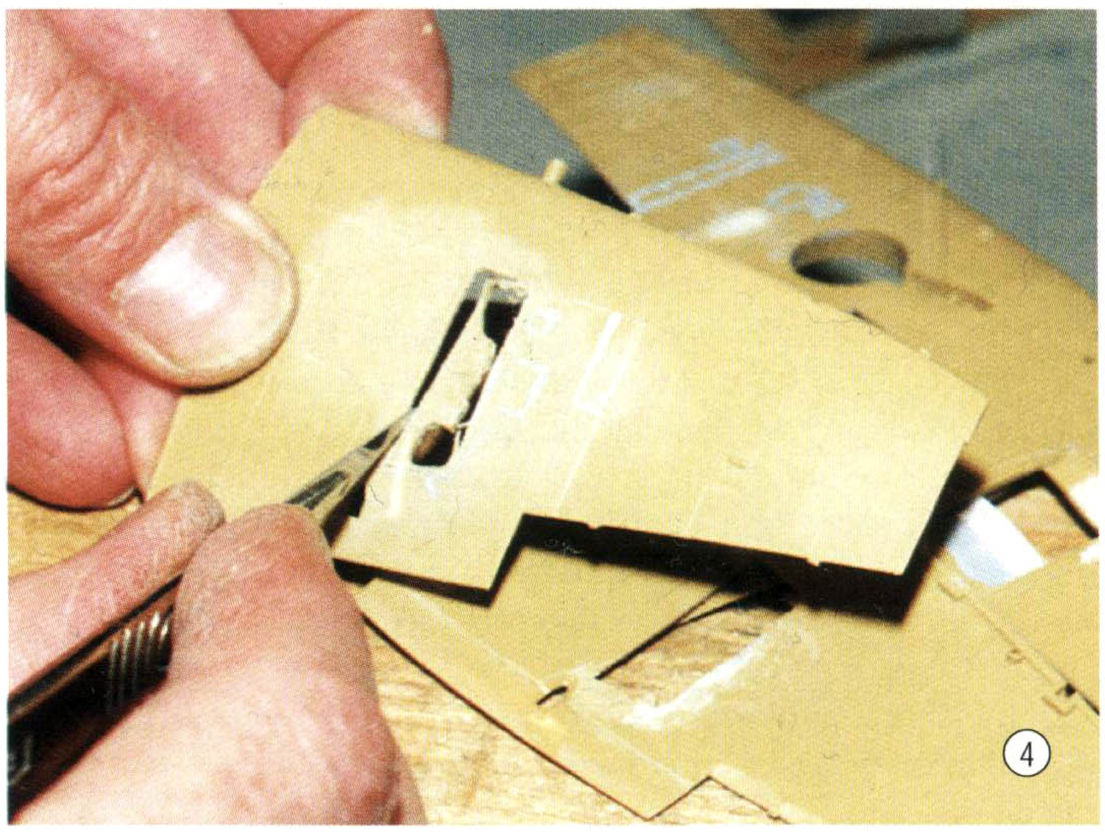
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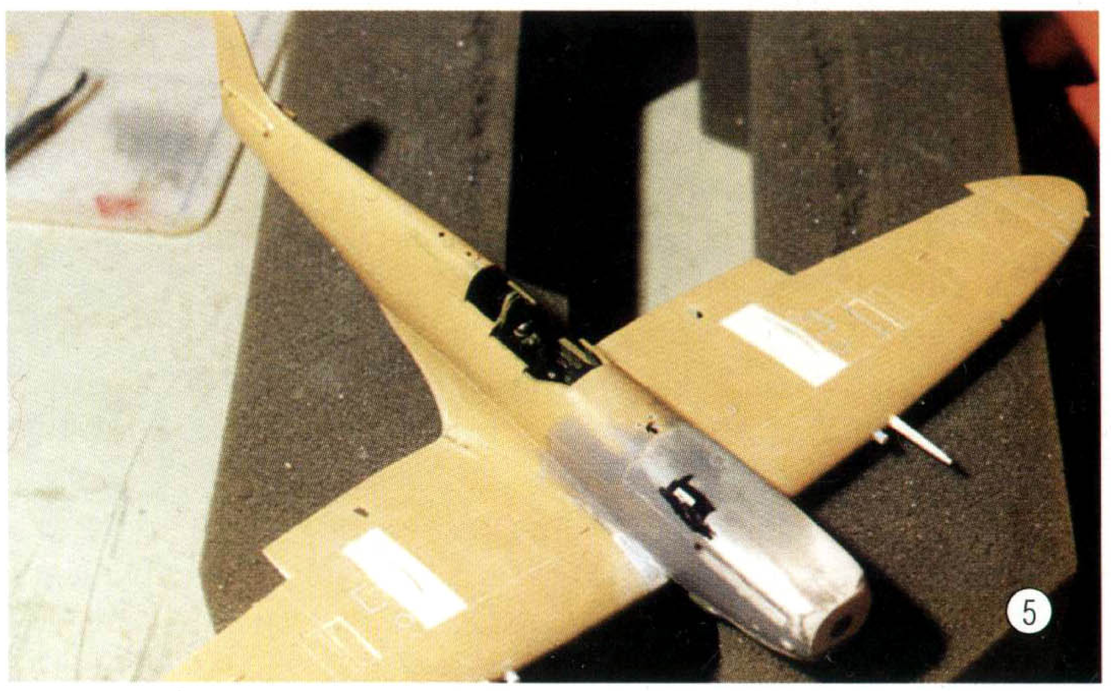
2



3



4



5

outline. Note, before applying the filler, I carefully removed the intake for the Heywood air compressor on the top right of the cowling. This was then reattached when I was satisfied with the shape of the cowling top contour.

Reference to the books listed at the end of this article will reveal photographs and side views of the full size cowling.

There are many cockpit detail sets available for the Spitfire these days. As there are a few changes, mainly instruments, between the Mk V and Mk IX interiors, care will have to be taken in choosing the appropriate set.

The interior was initially painted with acrylic Interior Green. When dry, a wash of Raw Umber oil paint to accentuate the shadow areas was applied. When dry, (ie left overnight), it was then dry brushed with a lighter shade of the interior colour to pick out the main highlights and detail, (white for the instruments). This will make all the difference when looking into the cockpit area of the finished model.

Once the interior detail is complete the fuselage halves were glued together. When dry, I made sure the resin nose fitted by checking alignment from the side, top and front, and then carefully tack glued it in place with tiny spots of superglue, and checked again before finally applying more superglue to complete the join.

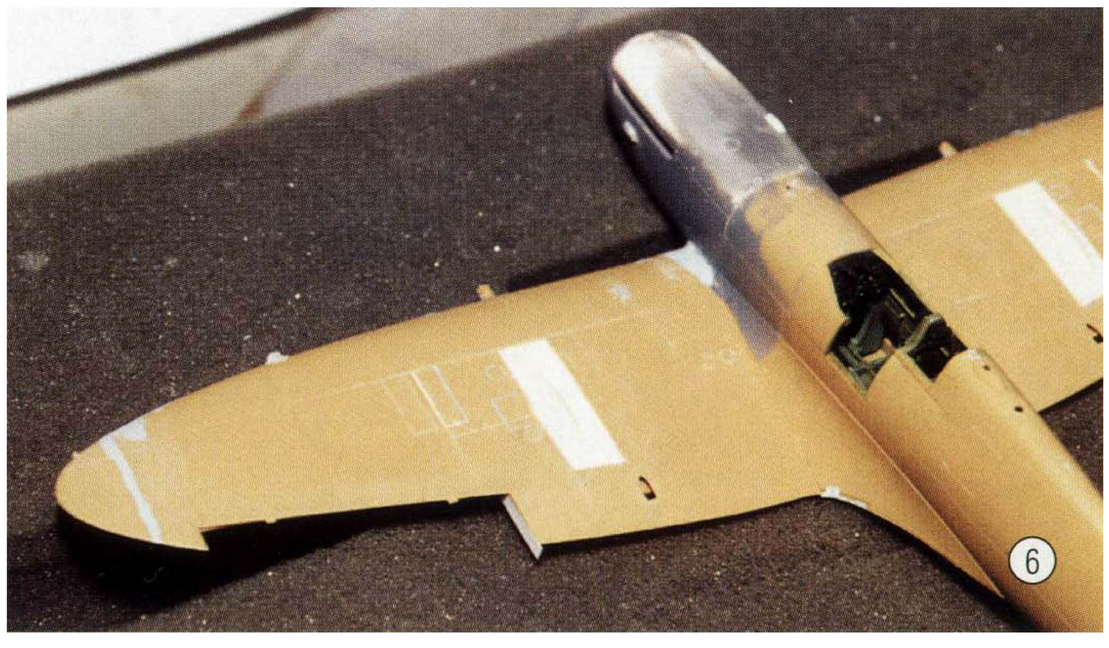
Wing conversion

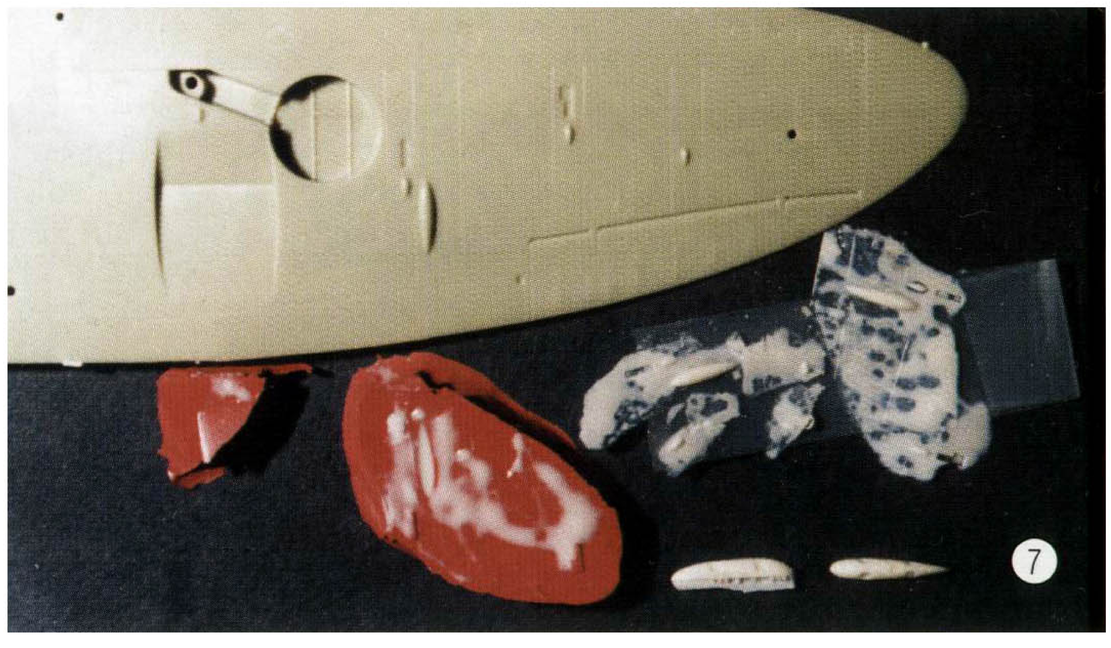
There is a fair amount of work involved to convert the kit wing to an 'e' wing, filling in some and rescribing other panel lines, inserting new gun covers and changing to different-shaped cannon fairings.

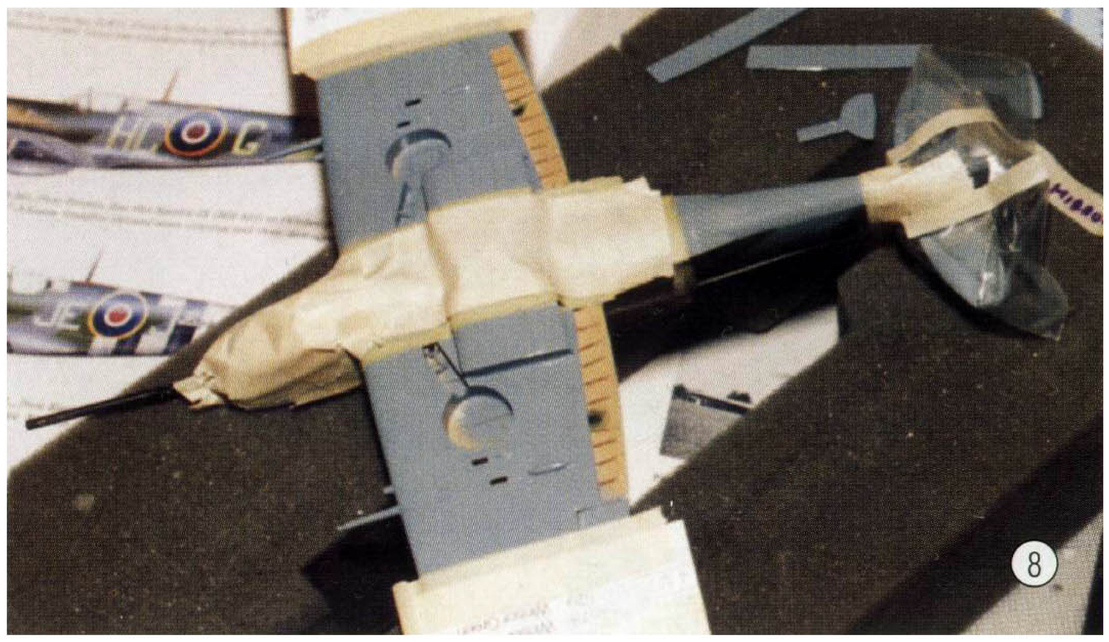
Shown in red in Photo **3**, are the panel lines which are to be filled in, together with the now redundant ejection chutes on the lower wing surface. The bulges outlined in red and coloured blue were removed as were the bulges and stiffeners over the wheel wells. The panel lines to be filled are also shown in red.

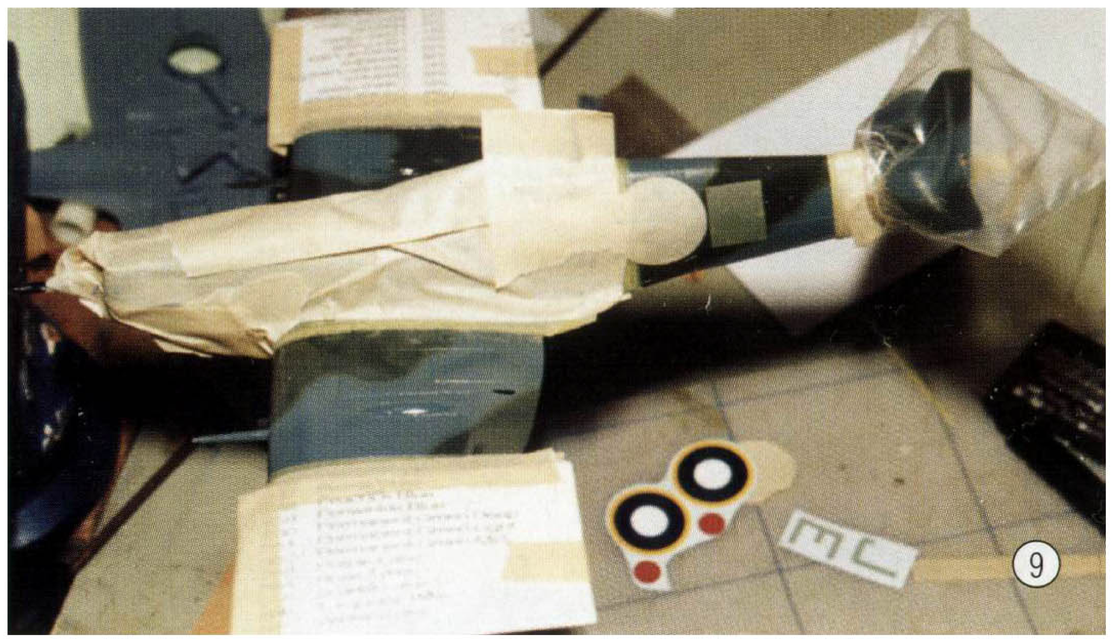
The larger bulges were filled from the inside first, using filler which in my case was Baking Powder and superglue, (avoid inhaling the fumes given off!). The photo shows the

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port wing; the same was done for the starboard wing. A further section to remove from the top surface was the gun bay panel, replaced with the one in the Hi-Tech set, see Photo **4**.

After smoothing the surface it was time to scribe in the panel lines, notably the repositioning of the outer machine gun bay.

The undercarriage legs were also raked further forward from their pintles on the Mk IX, making the mainwheels two inches further forward than on the Mk Vb. Not a lot in modelling terms but a help in terms of taking off and landing the real thing, two inches further forward of the centre of gravity!

Although the access panels are still there, with the ejector chutes filled in, the machine guns were not installed on the 'e' wing, as Neil has described in his article, the main armament being the 20mm cannon outboard and the .50 calibre machine gun inboard. This will require the blanking-off of the outer machine gun apertures on the kit wing

The cannon bay cover and the new barrels were added, see Photo **5**, to make the 'e' wing, via parts supplied in the Hi-Tech conversion set, with the appropriate cannon bay bulges.

The ailerons and flap areas on the lower wing half were cut away to await the fitting later of the Eduard brass etched flap set. On the top halves of the kit wings the small door apertures, which are raised to allow the flap actuator horns to extend through the wing top surface, were cut away and the plastic carefully scraped to thin the wing skin in the area around this aperture. To create the flap detail Eduard set 48-117 was used.

Photo **6** shows the blanking off of the end rib of the aileron cutout with thin plasticard, the cutout flap actuator door openings and the small amount of filler at the forward wing root. The filler on the top (and bottom) of the wingtip running from front to rear, was to remove a panel line which is not there on any Spitfire wingtips that I have seen.

This version of the Spitfire has symmetrical radiators, so the fitting of the new port side unit will require plasticard at the rear of the radiator cut-out to create the 'ramp' effect of the radiator exit and the panels and holes to be filled in, again as seen in Photo **6**.

The bulges to add to the underside of the wing at first presented a problem, but then I remembered the Arii/Otaki/Matchbox/Airfix Mk VIII kit, problem solved! To make copies of them I used some PlayDough, (Early Learning Centres or toy shops sell this putty-like substance in the UK), as a mould, carefully pressing the 'dough' onto the wing surface then carefully peeling it away from the wing and placing on a flat surface. Resin was then used to make copies of the bulges. Several moulds can be made at one time; spare castings will come in handy as the parts are small and some 'spares' could be very useful!

The short cannon fairings are used in the 'e' wing as the cannon are located further back and the barrels do not stick as far out of the leading edge. The stub fairings were used for the 0.50 calibre machine gun ports, se Photo **7**.

Tailplanes

The tailplane had to be altered to depict the later aerodynamic balance shape as used on many later Mk Vcs and Mk IXs. Photo 1 shows the line to cut down in blue and the panel lines to fill-in marked in red.

Canopy

The windscreen needs to be the later, internal armour type and the sliding canopy the fully bulged version. The Mk IX used an internal bullet-proof windscreen, so you will need to use the kit part C9. This together with the rear glazing, part C4, had their exteriors masked off and were then given a coat of Johnson's Klear on the inside. This helps to 'clarify' the 'glass' parts and helps prevent frosting when superglue is used to stick it in place. A further coat of Klear is given to the outer surfaces when the masking is removed, after painting is complete.

To the sliding canopy hood, (kit part C8), is added the hood catch and chord which were painted yellow and brown

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respectively. This was obtained from an Eduard brass etched sheet. The rearview mirror is from the kit but has a real mirror on its surface. This was material from a model car Special Interest Group stand at the IPMS(UK) Scale Modelworld show, and needs to be treated extremely carefully so as not to damage the mirror surface itself. This mirror effect can also be simulated using the Alclad II Chrome over black enamel paint.

Finishing JE•JJR

The main colours are Dark Green/Ocean Grey on the topsides with Medium Sea Grey undersides; Sky fuselage band and spinner and full 'distinctive markings' aka invasion stripes. The serial number, MK329, and the code letters, JE•J, came from Super Scale sheet 48-563 of which I had bought two, (originally by mistake!), but they came in handy for the four 'square bottomed' Js required for MK329. They are similar to MK392, Johnson's 'main' Spitfire Mk IX during this period. There is a theory that MK329 was made up at Johnson's request, for use as his spare aircraft, according to the photograph caption in 'Winged Victory'!

The Sky fuselage band was painted first and masked off before the top and underside colours were sprayed on. Photo **8** shows the model underside, painted with the camouflage colours and masked off ready to apply the Invasion stripes. The area for the roundel was represented by masking tape to enable the area around the letter 'J' to be masked off in the correct place, see Photo **9**.

All that remained was to apply the invasion stripes, apply the decals, weather and finally fit all the parts together to complete the conversion.

Mk XXX racks

To carry the beer barrels, I first had to make a pair of bomb racks and, not wishing to make two, I first made a single master and moulded it. I could then make the pair for the model, and of course, as many as I require for future models. I know the Hasegawa kit has some bomb racks included, but this was supposed to be an 'involved' model making feature!

I 'found' the beer barrels at a model show several years ago. Now, Model Aircraft Monthly have commissioned some new resin kegs which are included in the 'D-Day Spitfire Set' (see page 39). The support straps were made from 1.5mm wide strips of lead foil, the type found on wine bottles. It is easy to form around such shapes as the barrels. Thin wire or plastic rod can also be used to represent the sway braces.

This particular aircraft appears to have used a 30 gallon 'shaped' slipper tank and this came from the Arii kit. It needs little alteration, only to ensure it fits flush with the centre section shape and the addition of the two retaining hooks on the wing centre section, at the rear of the tank position.

Since I made this model, there have been several alternatives available to make a Spitfire Mk IX. Cutting the nose off the Arii/Otaki kit and grafting it onto the Tamiya kit, or the use of the Aeroclub nose.

Although the ICM and Hasegawa kits were available when I started this conversion, I had the Hi-Tech Mk IX Conversion Set 'in stock' and had been planning the conversion for some time, and decided that now was as good a time to do it! Waste not, want not, eh? In any case, both the ICM and Hasegawa kits each have their failings; the ICM kit with large sink marks in both wing and fuselage and the Hasegawa kit which is short in length. AM

References

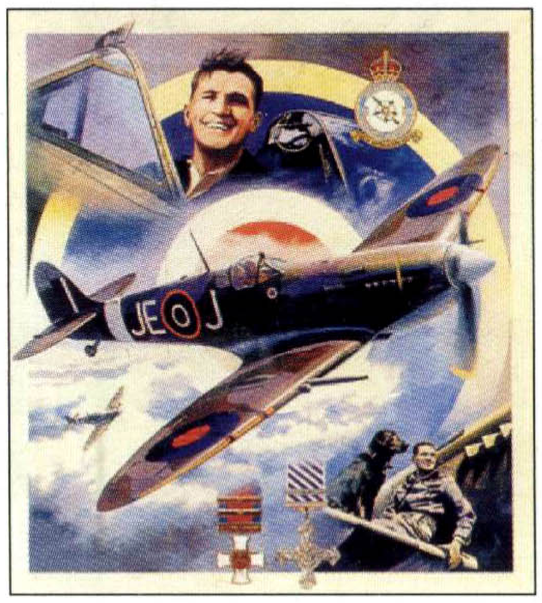
- Correspondence with Jack Douay, a pilot with No 132 Squadron, confirming the use of the beer carrying 'Aerial Dray'.
- 'Spitfire - The Canadians' by Robert Bracken, p84.
- 'Winged Victory' by Johnnie Johnson and Laddie Lucas, p159. (Contains the only known photograph of this a/c which shows the invasion stripes on top of the wing).
- 'Dutch Spitfires' by H van der Meer and T Melchers
- 'Spitfire - The History' by Eric Morgan and Edward Shacklady, p315.



Wing Commander James Edgar 'Johnnie' Johnson

AT THE END OF A SIX MONTH STINT AT THE PLANNING Staff of No 11 Group Headquarters, James Edgar 'Johnnie' Johnson, was offered the command of No 144 Canadian Wing, in 83 Group, which he took over in March 1944.

After working-up the Wing, which consisted of Nos 441, 442 and 443 RCAF Squadrons, equipped with brand-new Spitfire Mk IXc and e sub-types in readiness for the Normandy invasion, Johnson's Canadian Squadrons' Spitfires were amongst the first RAF aircraft to operate from French soil, when on 15 June 1944, they were temporarily based at the Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) at Croix-sur-Mer, (coded B3), in Normandy, during daylight hours.

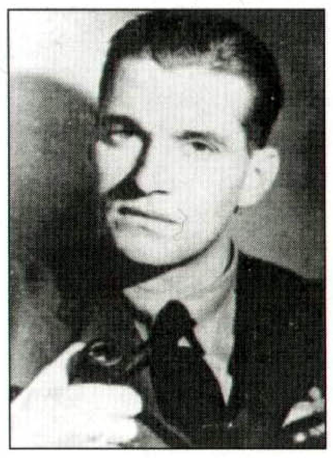


Johnson finished the war credited with 38 confirmed victories, making him officially the highest scoring RAF pilot in World War Two, although this claim to fame was later modified to the Northern European Theatre of Operations, following revelations about the, albeit unofficial, 50-plus score of Squadron Leader M T StJ 'Pat' Pattle in the Middle East and Greece.

'Johnnie' Johnson finally rose to the rank of Air Vice Marshal CB, CBE, DSO and DFC, before retiring from the RAF in the early 1960s. Sadly he died in 2001.

'Johnnie' Johnson's D-Day Spitfires MK392 - Spitfire Mk IXc or IXe?

It is thought that *at least* two Spitire Mk IXs were used by Wg Cdr Johnson during the D-Day operations. MK392, adorned with his initials, JE•J, is almost certainly one of them, although there seems to be some controversy over the exact sub-type that MK392 actually was!



It was built at Vickers Armstrong Supermarine's Castle Bromwich complex in early February 1944, and is most likely to have started life as a Mk IXc. 'The Bible', (ie Morgan and Shacklady's *'Spitfire - The History'*), gives no clue as to its wing armament, other than it was in a batch originally ordered as Spitfire Mk Vcs, but changed to Mk IXs, which were produced as Merlin 66-engined LF Mk IXcs.

MK392 left 8 MU on 12 February 1944 and appears to have remained in squadron service until wriiten off 'Cat E' on 20 April 1945. It was assigned to No 441 Squadron and was presumably allocated to Wg Cdr Johnson from there, who then had his initials painted on the fuselage sides.

No identifiable photographs appear to exist of MK392, but there is a wonderful photo of Wg Cdr Johnson with his pet labrador 'Sally', standing infront of a Spitfire Mk IXe, in what appear to be full invasion stripes, reportedly taken in July 1944.



So could MK392 have been a Spitfire Mk IXe?

According to Michael J F Bowyer's excellent book *'Fighters for the Many'*, there were some forty or so Spitfire Mk IXes on 2 TAF's strength on D-Day 6 June 1944 - could MK392 have been one of them? The serial number allocations either side of MK392 were all Spitfire Mk IXcs, but even if MK392 had been built as a Mk IXc, it is quite possible that its wing armament could have been changed by an 'In Service Modification' or even 'a factory conversion', (as in the case of ML407). As a famous Wing Leader, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that Johnson could even have had the armament changed into the then new 'e' wing armament!?! Remember, 'RHIP', (Rank Has Its Privileges!).

The 'jury is still out' and to be honest, we may NEVER know for certain if MK392 had 'c' or 'e' wing armament when Wg Cdr Johnson was flying out of B3/St Croix-sur-Mer, but it does allow you to produce a model from a standard kit - with a few individual touches!!

JE•JJR, an alternative?

The other aircraft, often quoted as Wg Cdr Johnson's back-up machine, and the one which is supposed to have been used for the 'beer run', is MK329, (or MJ329, depending on which references you consult!). There is certainly a contemporary photograph of a Spitfire coded JE•JJR, but the serial number isn't visible. Unfortunately, MK329 doesn't appear on any Spitfire serial number listing, and so technically didn't exist. The serial number MJ329, which does exist, was never allocated to either No 441, 442 or 443 (RCAF) Squadrons, presumably from whom Wg Cdr Johnson would have been allocated his personal aircraft! But stranger things have happened and in any event, why let a few questionable facts get in the way of a good model!

If any reader has any theories or knows anything about any of these anomalies we would love to hear from you. AM





Sea Venom Dream

Kev Baxter passed a milestone this year and whilst his life may not have begun as advertised, it continues apace and in a moment of reflection he decided that he had to begin to make some hard modelling decisions...

THE CONCEPT OF MORTALITY versus rate of modelling production has been discussed in the modelling press before, however, it was always happening to someone else until I realised that at the rate I am building kits I only have a fairly limited number of models 'left in me', especially in comparison to the hundreds of boxes clogging up my shelves. More prioritisation was required, and therefore I decided that it was time to build the models that are really important to me, since I could no longer afford to put off models and, "Wait until I'm good enough to do them justice".

Coincidental with these morbid thoughts, I had acquired Adrian Balch's splendid book 'de Havilland Twin Booms'. I was inspired to create a model of a RN Air Direction School (ADS) Sea Venom FAW.21 from the late 1960s when, as a small boy, I holidayed with my family in a house on the extended centreline of RNAS Yeovilton's main runway and had aeroplanes of a nautical variety well and truly drummed into my awareness for all time.

This type was one of the aeroplanes that had influenced me so much, indeed I remember avidly drawing them and realising that they were different to the Sea Vixens! Since I enjoy the challenge of 'bashing' Frog kits so much, this seemed like an obvious choice to mark my 40th year.

The kit

Several years ago, Premiere, in conjunction with Tasman Models, had re-released the Frog Sea Venom with five extra white-metal parts, namely: the instrument panel, canopy frame, control column and two seats, plus a vac-form canopy, together with a new, more comprehensive instruction sheet with detailed photographs of the subject and suggested improvement to the basic kit.

The mouldings were showing their (considerable) age however, and some TLC was definitely in order to bring this major aspect of the kit up to date (photo **1**). Further to the kit offerings, photographs showed these aeroplanes with 100 gallon Hunter drop tanks fitted to extend their sortie time and so I robbed a pair of resin items from the PJ Hunter F.6 kit to complete the additional parts.

Construction

I began my task, as so often with my Naval subjects, by chopping the wings up! Furthermore, and to add some 'life' to the model, I removed the trailing edge surfaces and rudders for repositioning later in the build (photos **2** and **3**).

To begin construction, I cemented the fuselage parts together and installed a floor in the cockpit. These parts were sprayed with Halford's Black auto acrylic aerosol paint as an experiment and to save time and effort with my airbrush. The result was a rather thick coat of paint, however, it did adhere extremely well and was easily over-brushed with a highlight of dark grey.

I carefully placed the instrument panel in the fuselage, after painting and highlighting it, ensuring that it would line up correctly with the windscreen and canopy. Once the panel was in place I used lead foil from a wine bottle, which

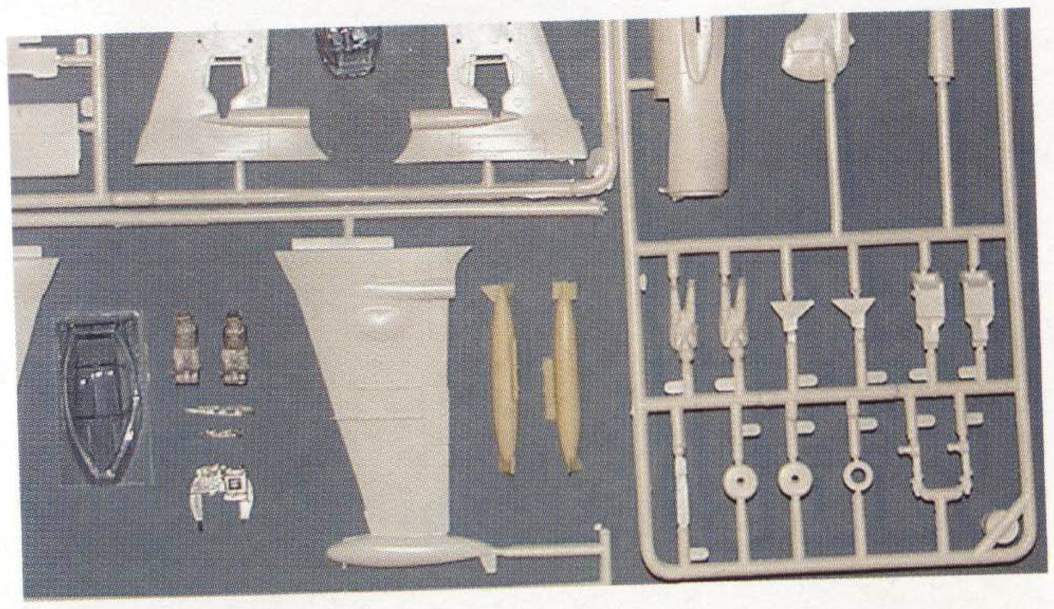


Photo 1

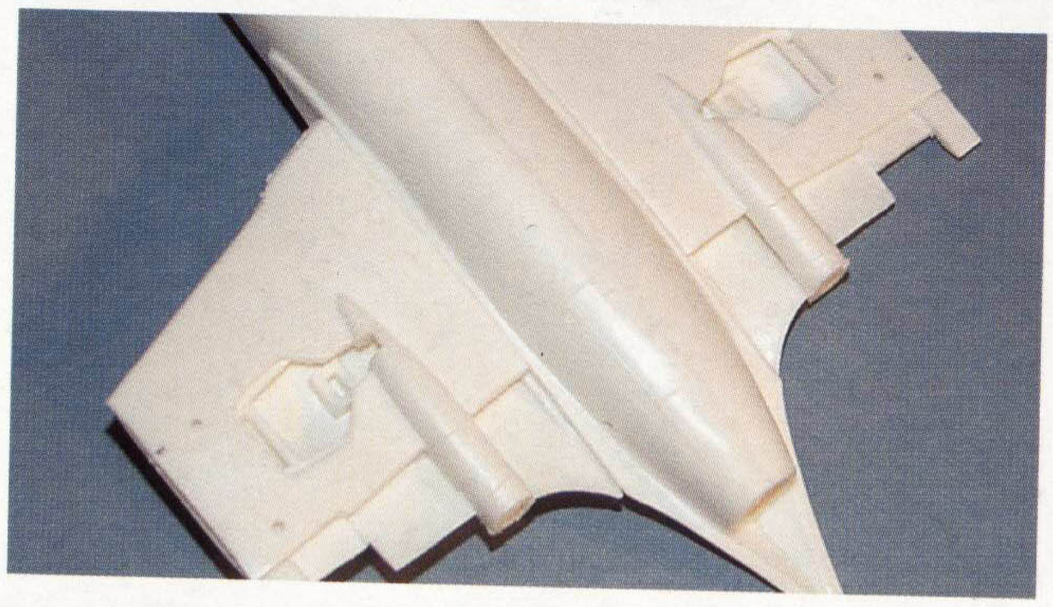


Photo 2

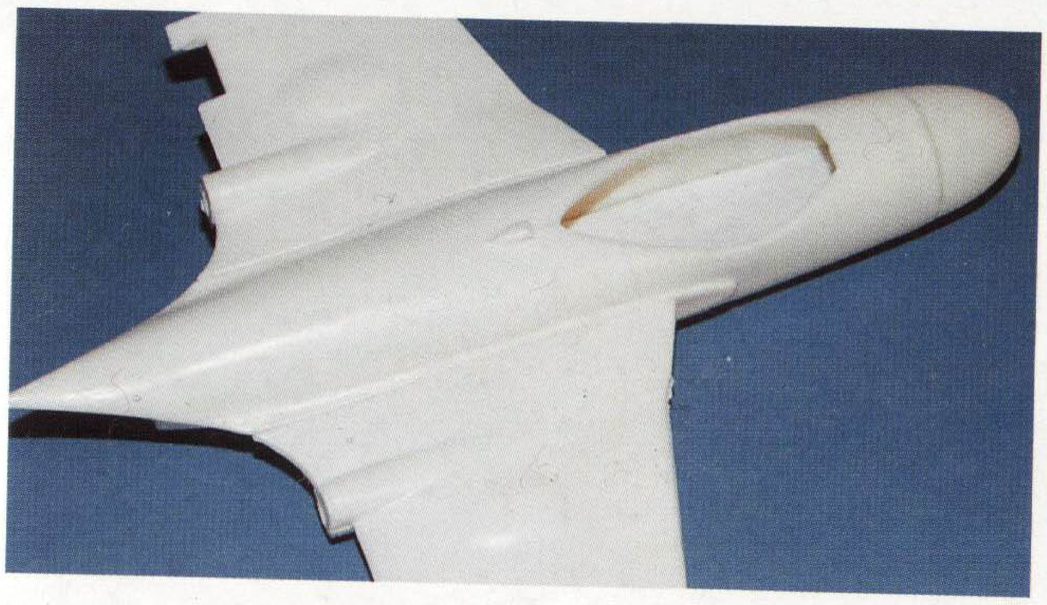


Photo 3

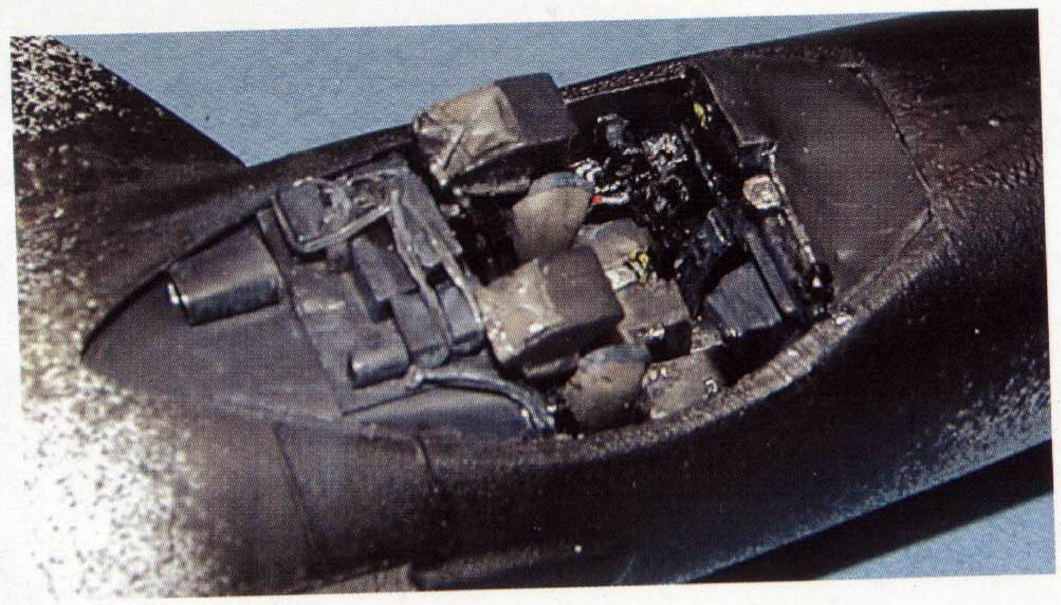


Photo 4

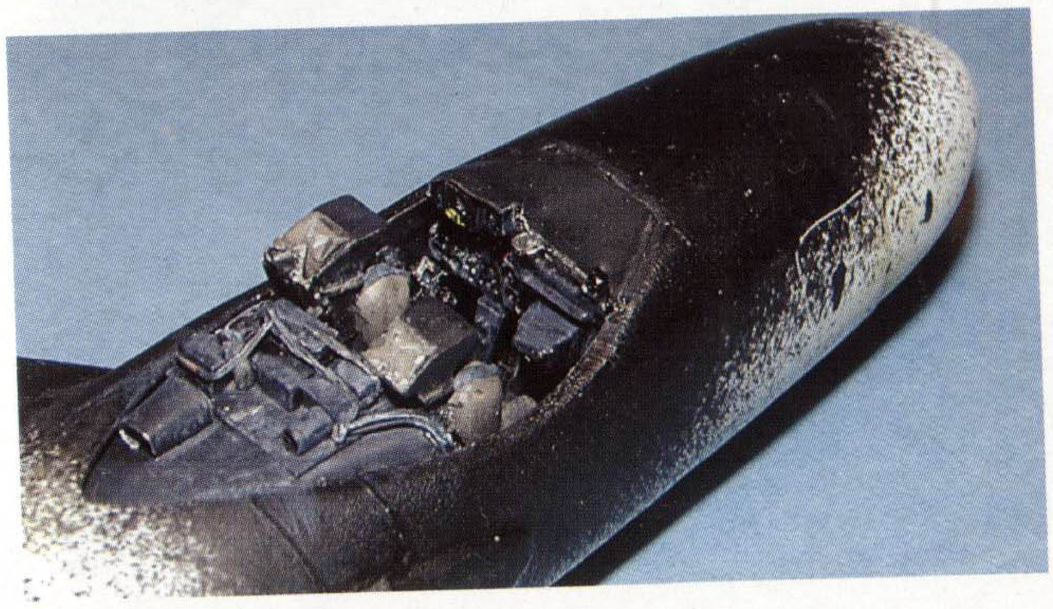


Photo 5

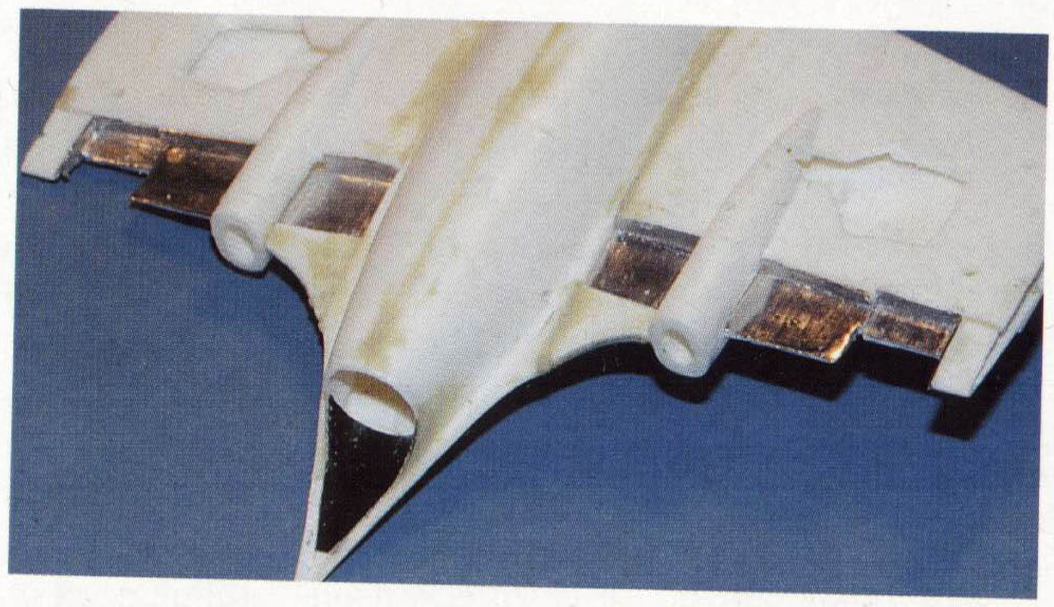


Photo 6

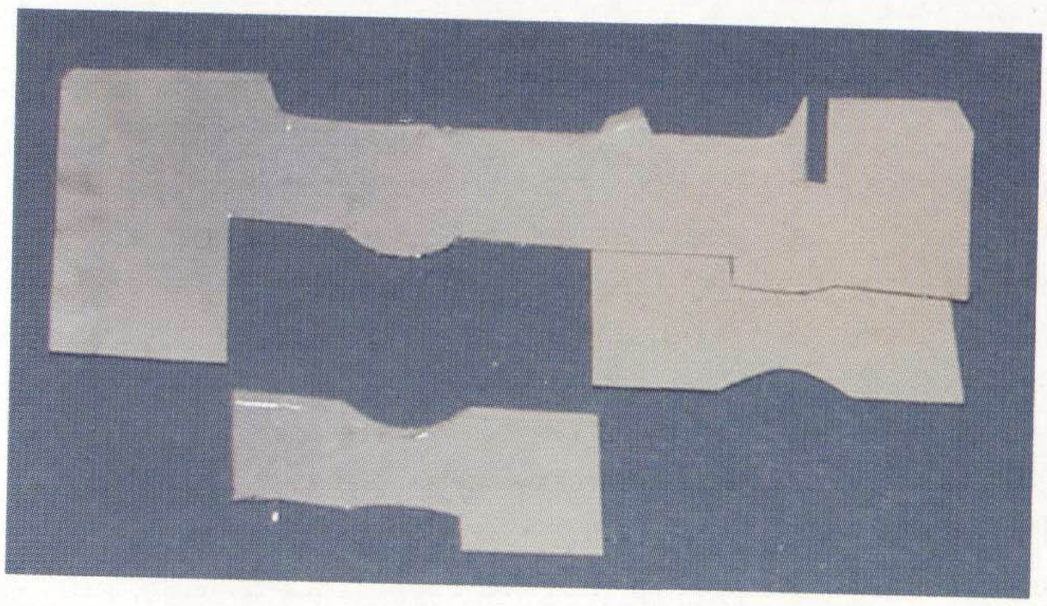


Photo 7

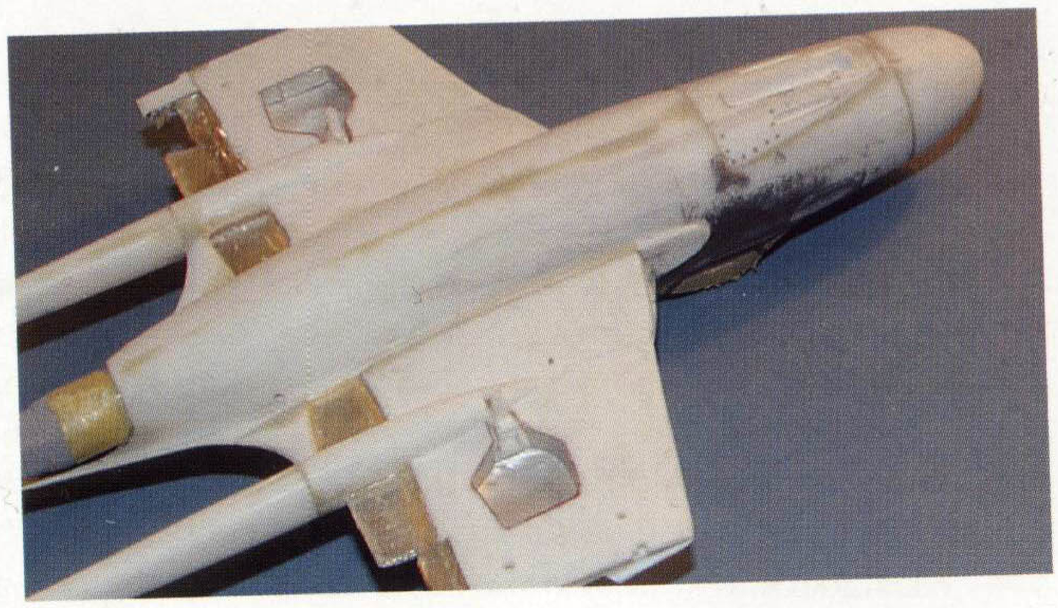


Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12

was already a pleasingly different tone of black, to create a dashboard.

With reference to the photographs in the instructions and those I had taken myself at the FAA Museum, Yeovilton, I constructed the remaining 'very busy' cockpit detail from scratch, around the white metal part and also a rear radio shelf behind the seats that also needed careful positioning to ensure the correct distance was maintained between the seats and the instrument panel (photo **4**).

The radio parts and header tank on the rear shelf were manufactured from lumps of scrap plastic, metal foil and lycra thread for the wiring. The ejection seats were painted and installed, minus their handles and seat pins to avoid loss during construction, with the observer's seat being let into the floor and positioned slightly behind the pilot's seat as was de Havilland's wont (photo **5**).

This was as far as the cockpit work could progress at this stage, therefore attention was turned to the undersides.

The flap and airbrake housings were boxed-in, again using wine bottle foil, but this time, the natural metal side was left outermost. The undercarriage bays were also boxed-in, however, due to the 'sit' of the model when completed, I decided that I needn't go mad with detailing them since they would be virtually impossible to see. The copious amounts of filler I had applied to the joints was then sanded down and I took the opportunity to modify the nose profile slightly to closer reflect the subtle contours of the real aeroplane as opposed to the simplistic tubular lines of the kit. Moreover, just aft of the cannon housing, the real aeroplane had strengthening plates fitted to the fuselage and this was replicated with the now ubiquitous wine bottle foil (photo **6**).

I simulated the rivet detail on the cannon housing by using an extremely fine drill bit and after this step I could complete the fuselage by attaching the tail booms and tailplane. Inevitably after this stage there were some small imperfections in the joins that required filling and blending in. The tailplane itself was quite pitted the age of the moulds and this was rubbed down before sliding it into place and carefully aligning it so that it sat square between the fins.

At this point I turned my attention to the trailing edge surfaces. The airbrakes and flaps were often deployed when the aircraft was 'at rest' and I had already decided to model this along with the wing fold detail for that extra challenge. And challenging it was too, because unlike the NF.3 with inboard and outboard flaps, the flaps on the naval variants were joined, presumably to increase flap area for added effect when operating in the carrier environment, around the tail booms (photo **7**).

Moreover, the inboard flaps were housed in a recess under the wing and outboard of the booms this was repeated. The flap also formed part of the trailing edge of the wing.

To create this complex shape, I pressed soft metal foil into the recesses of the flap housings and around the boom and then straightened this out carefully before cutting it out and using the shape as a template to make the flaps from similar material (photo **8**).

I added box sections to the inboard and outboard areas and then folded the excess edge over a scalpel blade to create the trailing edge before trimming this to size. Strengthening strips were added to the 'U' to help maintain its shape and to add structure. Compared to plasticard and brass, the beauty of lead foil, (other than its malleability, colour and small

parts that do not go 'ping' into another dimension), is that rivet detail can be gently pressed into it and once it is given a wash of 'dirty' thinners to remove the shine, it looks like real metal - because it is! (photo **9**).

The airbrakes were again a tricky shape because they deployed asymmetrically top and bottom from a hinge slightly forward of the trailing edge. Consequently, the parts could not be simply cut from the trailing edge and stuck back on.

The upper wing part had the shape removed while the lower wing part had longitudinal saw marks sliced into the housing and the plastic removed with a chisel blade to the required depth before filing it to a uniform section.

Replacement airbrakes were made from thick plasticard cut to plan-view shape and profiled by removing excess plastic along a lateral saw mark before shaping the upper trailing edge aerofoil section using a scalpel blade and a sanding block. Two ovals were then drilled into the outboard edges to simulate the 'buffet' holes.

The canopy was fitted at this point to allow it to be masked, filled and faired into the correct shape prior to painting. First of all, however, Radio Control modelling 'pin-stripe' tape was stuck along the inside of the canopy to replicate the sealing material used. Whilst this tape is slightly thicker than standard Tamiya masking tape, its colour and texture were an excellent match for the real thing. Once the tape had been put in place, it was gently pressed into the canopy frame using a touch of liquid polystyrene cement to ensure that it did not 'delaminate' once the canopy was in place.

To complete the fuselage construction I modified the jet efflux, drilling out the rear of the fuselage in anticipation of a scratchbuilt item and then blended the inverted L-shape kit profile into the correct curve around the tail pipe using foil and Milliput. The hook fairing was scraped down to a scale thickness and skinned, again using foil (photo **10**).

My attention was then turned to the 'simple task' of building the wings. The outboard wing sections were simply stuck together and had their section modified since it was a curious 'reverse' aerofoil section that may or may not have flown depending on whether the aeroplane was travelling backwards!

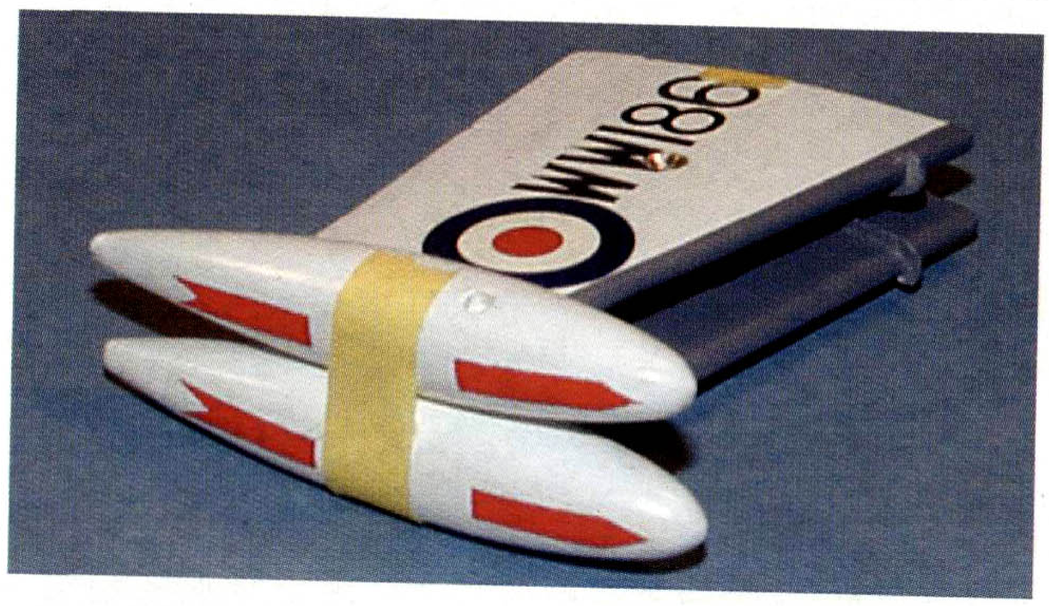


Photo 13

I removed the oversized fins from the fixed wing tanks and also drilled out the fuel dump vents and the filler caps to the correct size. I replaced the dump vents with stretched sprue that was drilled out to form a small pipe. The filler caps were made from foil discs punched from a punch and die set with 'spanner holes' pressed into them using the points of my tweezers (photo **11**). The crude, fixed leading edge slots, were removed from the kit parts and foil replacements were attached to plasticard ribs (photo **12**). Replacement fins were cut from foil and added later in the build along with navigation lights made from red and green plastic, heat-stretched, and 'blobbed' back on itself by exposure of the ends to a candle flame.

Painting and Decalling

The model was painted at this stage to allow the folded wings to be completed without difficulty and to preserve the wing-fold detail from the masking process (photo **13**).

The transparency had already been carefully masked to ensure that the internal 'seals' were symmetrical and were not incorrectly covered, which left landing gear bays and the flap and airbrake housings to be filled with latex masking fluid.

Firstly the model was sprayed with an acrylic zinc chromate primer that would show up surface imperfections, (of which there were many to be revisited), and to act as a barrier to the Tetrosyl acrylic white I was using for the underside. I had bought the Tetrosyl paint for another project and so aggressively did it attack the plastic on that model that it 'ate' around the filler, shrinking the adjacent plastic and leaving the filler standing proud! Subsequent coats did not lessen this effect since the solvent seemed to reactivate the whole process and only after coating the model with Johnson's Klear, was any protection provided.

The 'primer' on this model was partially successful, however, I eventually resorted to a coat of trusted Klear to seal the plastic fully and whilst I believed that this would not provide a very good key, the Tetrosyl was so adherent that I was able to 'cut' it back using progressively finer abrasives until I had a beautiful gloss coat that could have taken decals immediately.

The AeroMaster Extra Dark Sea Grey I used on the upper surfaces was completely the opposite - with a totally matt finish!

I was torn between two basic schemes used by the ADS. Whilst both schemes featured Extra Dark Sea Grey and White, the earlier scheme featured the black radome and matching tail codes and modex numbers on the nose whilst the later scheme featured only the modex code and a grey radome. I decided upon the latter scheme since I could positively tie the dates of these aeroplanes to when I was there. Furthermore, they featured the 'go-faster' stripes on the wing tanks, which added some welcome colour.

The decals were applied after a coat of Johnsons Klear to minimise the risk of silvering. I had decided to model WW186/732 because I had a good reference photograph and it featured red flashing on all of the wing tanks, which I decided looked more pleasing. National markings came from Modeldecal stock sheets that proved to be their usual excellent standard.

The 'No Step' stencilling was taken from the kit sheet and was far from ideal in that it failed to adhere and silvered badly. I removed these and replaced them with items from a Modelart sheet. Due to the removal of the previous decals and the slightly uneven surface remaining, these stencils also silvered slightly. Afterwards this was removed by touching over the silvering with the base colour paint.

The black and white codes were problematic. I originally tried to cut out a thinner white number to overlay on the black code, however, this proved to be too difficult because of the curvature of the numbers and the frailty of the resultant decal causing it to split in the water. I thus resorted to hand painting the white inners after a stiff drink to bolster the nerves!

For the 'arrows' on the wing and drop tanks, I simply sprayed Tamiya

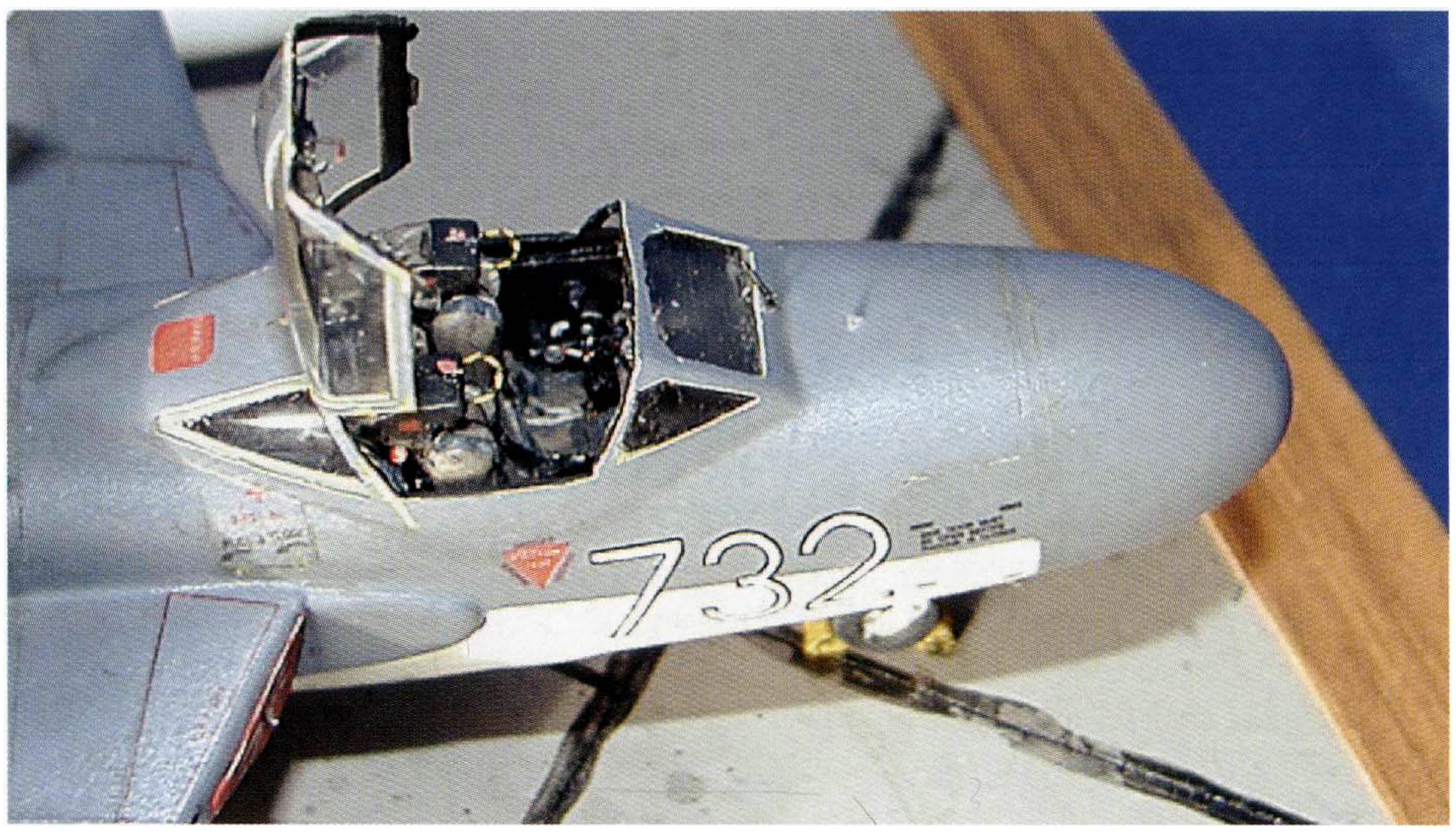


acrylic red onto blank decal sheet and sealed it, using Johnsons Kleer. The arrows were then cut out and placed on the model; some flaking occurred, however, it was minimal and it was easily touched up afterwards.

The decals were sealed using Microscale Satin Varnish and the re-scribed panel lines were cleared of excess paint to allow the weathering of Payne's grey and burnt umber oil paints to key. The weathering was, however, restricted at this point to the parts that would be inaccessible after final assembly to avoid unsightly stray fingerprints.

Final Assembly

The landing gear provided in the kit is crude but can be used after much modification. The main gear legs were rounded off and the huge axles, originally designed to be pushed through the wheel hub and melted into place using a hot knife, were sliced through and replaced by pin axles. Brake pipes were added using copper wire and the holes in the wheels were covered using punched foil dappled with 'rivet' detail. The gear legs were then located into their bays after dry-fitting to ensure the correct length was achieved for the model to 'sit' properly.



It was during this process that I discovered that the nose wheel is the wrong diameter. I had worked hard on the part, drilling out the hinge, shaping the drag arm casting, inserting an oleo piston and removing the excess plastic from the tyre circumference to produce a characteristic double rimmed anti-shimmy tyre. But, it was after all this effort when fitting the gear that I realised that the tyre is too small! My dilemma was whether to remove the wheel and replace it with a larger one, or adjust the main gear legs to give the model the right sit. After a trawl through my spares box, I decided on the latter!

The gear doors were constructed from foil, cut and shaped to the complicated compound curves and further built up to replicate the internal structure, particularly on the nose wheel door. Small hinges were constructed to give the doors an authentic 'hang'.

Internal ribbing was added to the flap housings using foil strips, from a different bottle, with a subtly different tone to the rest of the housing. The flaps were fitted in a similar fashion to the gear doors and the actuators were crafted from micro tubing and fuse wire cut to length with fuse wire for the hydraulic piping. The air-brakes were also slotted into their housings and adjusted so that they would not foul on the wings in the folded position.

I was bemused at this point as to how quickly things had progressed. I had had no major set-backs and was enjoying this model more than I had any other for a long time. Further joy came even during final assembly, when you are bound to drop the thing since there's nowhere to hold onto it because nothing went wrong!

The wings were attached using bent pins set in micro tubing spars that provide strength and facilitate 'rigging'. Around this hinge the fold detail was built, using, once more, lead foil for structural parts and fuse wire for tubing and locks. Individual parts were fabricated and then duplicated to be attached in mirror image. A wash of 'dirty' thinners and burnt umber oil paint took the shine off the metal foil and gave just the right touch of 'heavy usage'.

Final touches were added such as the mass balances on the elevators, pitot probe and cover, aerials and a step. The gun camera was added from the kit along with catapult strop hooks created from lead solder. More solder was gently beaten flat and then shaped into the arrestor hook. This method has the advantage of creating a flat 'beaver tail' to work with whilst maintaining a tubular stem. This part was attached to the 'A' frame after a small cross brace was added that held the hook into the up-lock.

I decided to 'drop' the hook since photographs showed that this was not uncommon practice on dispersal and I fitted this part after sliding the jet pipe into the rear fuselage aperture. I decided against making a 'turbine' to block the jet pipe off since the only way to see through the model was to bend down to table level, look under the tailplane and shine a torch into the cockpit. You can take things too far!



Another 'cop-out' was the use of the intake covers. The kit's intakes would have needed major surgery to make them acceptable, therefore it was just easier to hide them. However, the auxiliary intakes next to the main intakes were modified by slightly widening them and adding a small venturi in the starboard orifice.

Various air scoops were manufactured for the underside engine covers and the large scoop on the spine was bored out and highlighted. The underwing tanks were treated the same as the tip tanks with the filler caps drilled out and replaced with foil discs and the stencilling was found in a Modelart Hunter decal sheet. The last items fitted were the canopy with its locking mechanism added from fuse wire and foil attached to the white metal strut provided and the ejection seat handles with their safety pins made from punched foil.

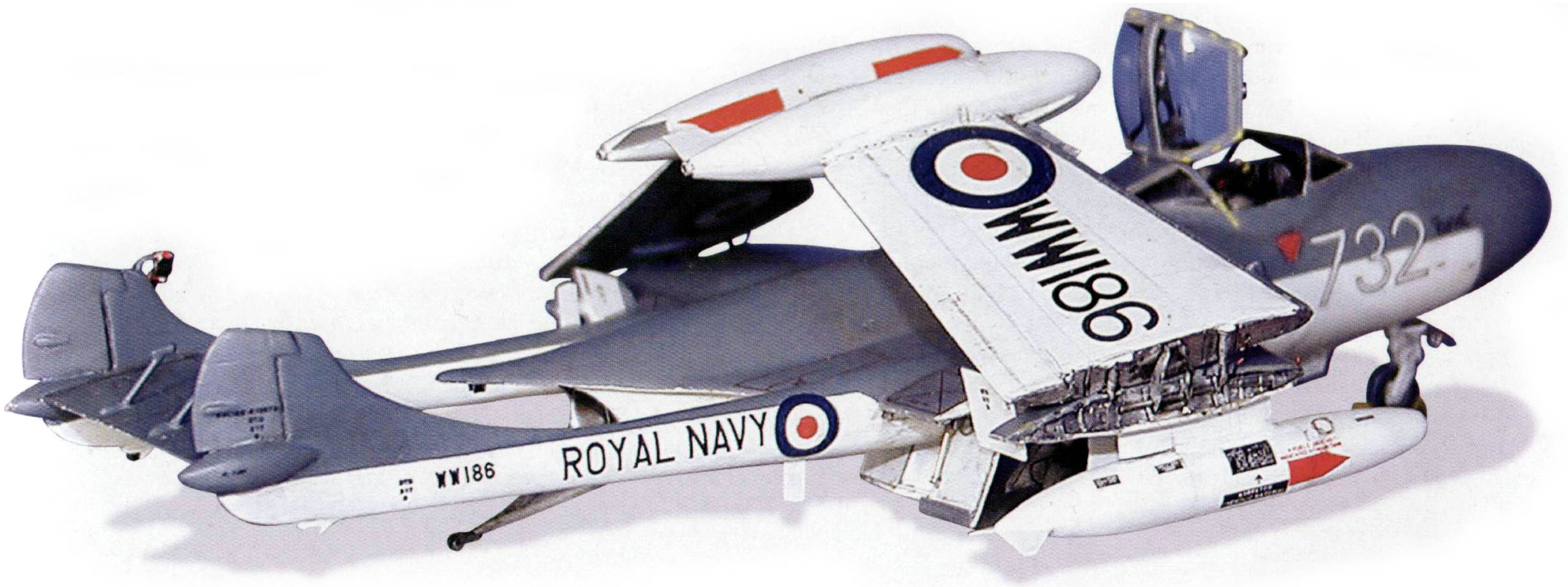
The model was pinned to the base and chocks made from sprue were added to complete the scene.

Conclusion

This was probably the most enjoyable model I have built in a long time. Updating kits of the same vintage as myself is challenging, however, this model was completely trouble free to build and it had the added delight of being a subject close to my heart and that I can directly trace my subsequent involvement in aviation to. It may be said that, 'Variety is the spice of life', however, if modelling can be this much fun why do anything else? Lookout that pile of Sea Vixens and Phantoms! AM

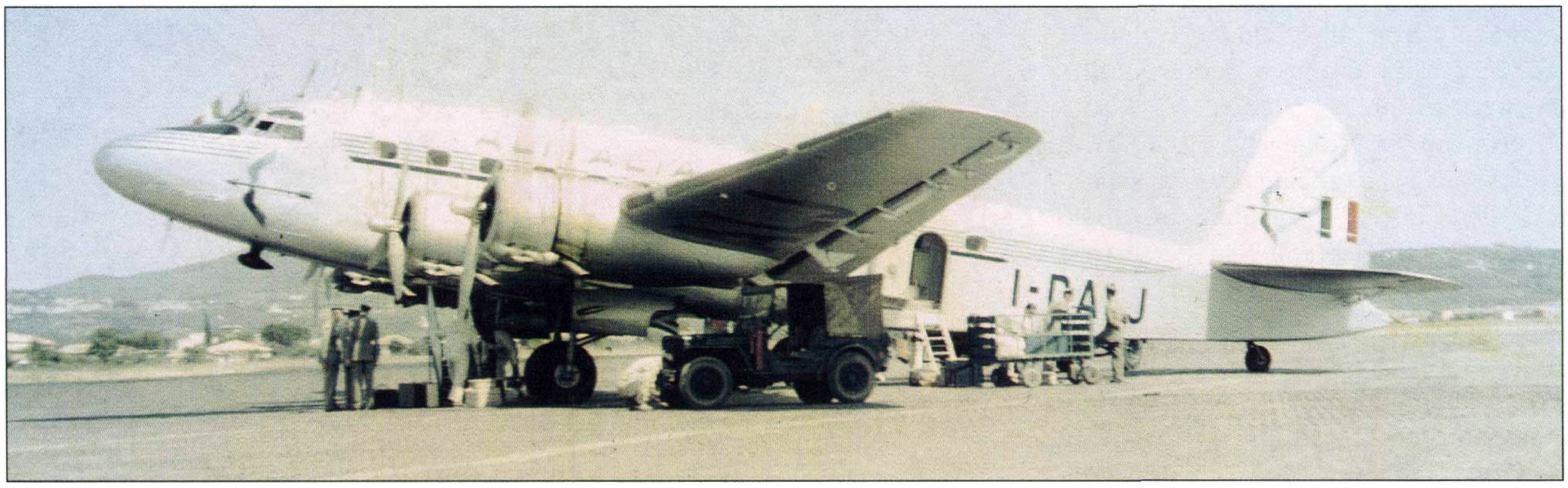
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- 'Encyclopaedia of the FAA since 1945' by Paul Beaver
- 'Postwar Military Aircraft: 5, de Havilland Vampire, Venom and Sea Vixen' by Philip Birtles
- 'de Havilland Twin Booms' by Adrian Balch



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Forum



Mystery Italian airliner

Dear Neil,

Congratulations on a great magazine - it's getting better by the month! With regard to Merle Olmstead's fascinating letter in 'Forum' on p55 of last month's issue, (May, Vol 3/issue 5), the photograph of the 'unidentified airliner' in question is in fact a Savoia Marchetti SM 95. This aircraft was originally designed as a military transport in the latter part of World War Two, but was used as a civil transport by 'ALITALIA', and others, throughout Europe, including making the first 'ALITALIA' Rome-to-London(Northolt) flight in 1948. I-DALJ, (c/n 8), was named '*Cristoforo Colombo*'.

The winged arrow was the logo used by 'ALITALIA' at the time and can be seen on photographs of other contemporary 'ALITALIA' aircraft, as can the military style fin flash. I have no idea what it was doing in Cyprus in July 1949 though, but if I were to speculate, it might well be something to do with the relocation of European Jews to Israel after the founding of the state in 1948. A great many seem to have gone there via Cyprus at around this time. AM

Andy Brooks
via e-mail

Belgian Stirlings

Dear Neil,

With reference to the article on the Short Stirling in the April issue, (Vol 3/issue 4). At least nine Stirling Mk Vs were operated by the Belgian civil aviation company 'Trans-Air' in the late 1940s. Of these, I have seven registrations recorded which include - OO-XAC, OO-XAD, OO-XAE, OO-XAH, OO-XAK, OO-XAS and OO-XAV. They were used primarily to transport missionaries, mainly to China, in the immediate post-war years.

On p107, of the excellent book, 'Brussels Airport' by Frans van Humbeek, (printed in English), there is a photo of OO-XAC. For anyone interested, in another publication on the subject, '100 ans d'Aviation Belge/100 jaren van Belgische Luchtvaart', there is a photo of a civil Halifax C.VI, OO-XAB with a ventral baggage pannier. The civil registration was painted on the aircraft but it was resold in the UK before the registration was accepted by the Civil Aviation Board in Belgium.

Incidentally, on Jon Freeman's illustration of OO-XAS on p14, I think he has drawn the three civil aircraft identification registration letters, XAS, under the port wing upside down, as they should read from the front and not the rear of the aircraft! AM

Jean-Claude Heurter
Villers le Bouillet, Belgium



Correcting a correction!



To 'illustrate' Pete Munro's letter in the May issue, (Vol 3/issue 5), which was making a couple of corrections to the otherwise excellent 'Vampire Story' article by John Bilcliffe in the March issue of 'MAM', (Vol 3/issue 3), we managed to confuse readers even further by printing the wrong photos to go with the letter *(apologies Neil, Art Dir)*!

To reiterate and make amends to Pete, the top photo on p12 of the March issue, (Vol 3/issue 3), is not a Sea Venom. It is an ex-Swiss Air Force Venom FB.4, and the middle picture on p12 is also an ex-Swiss Air Force Venom FB.4 and not a Vampire.

My apologies to Pete, and the rest of the readership. AM

Neil Robinson,
Editor





Grumman tail

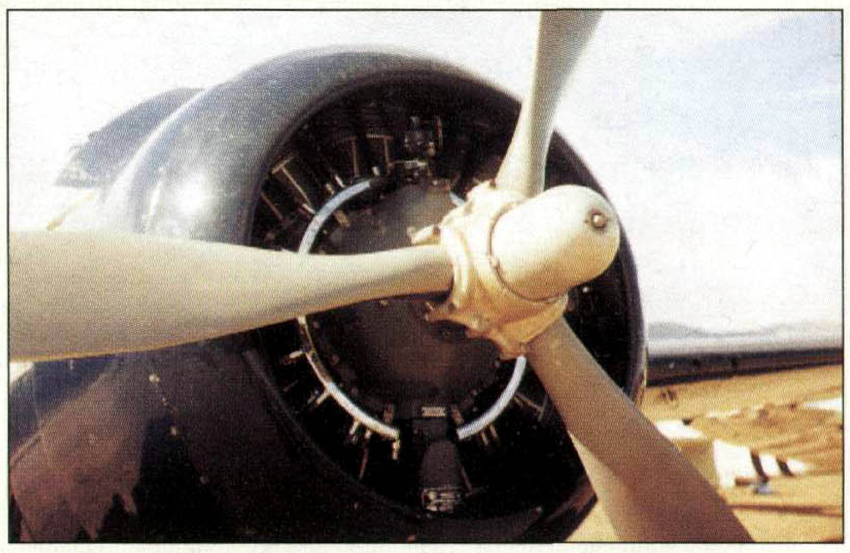
Dear Neil,

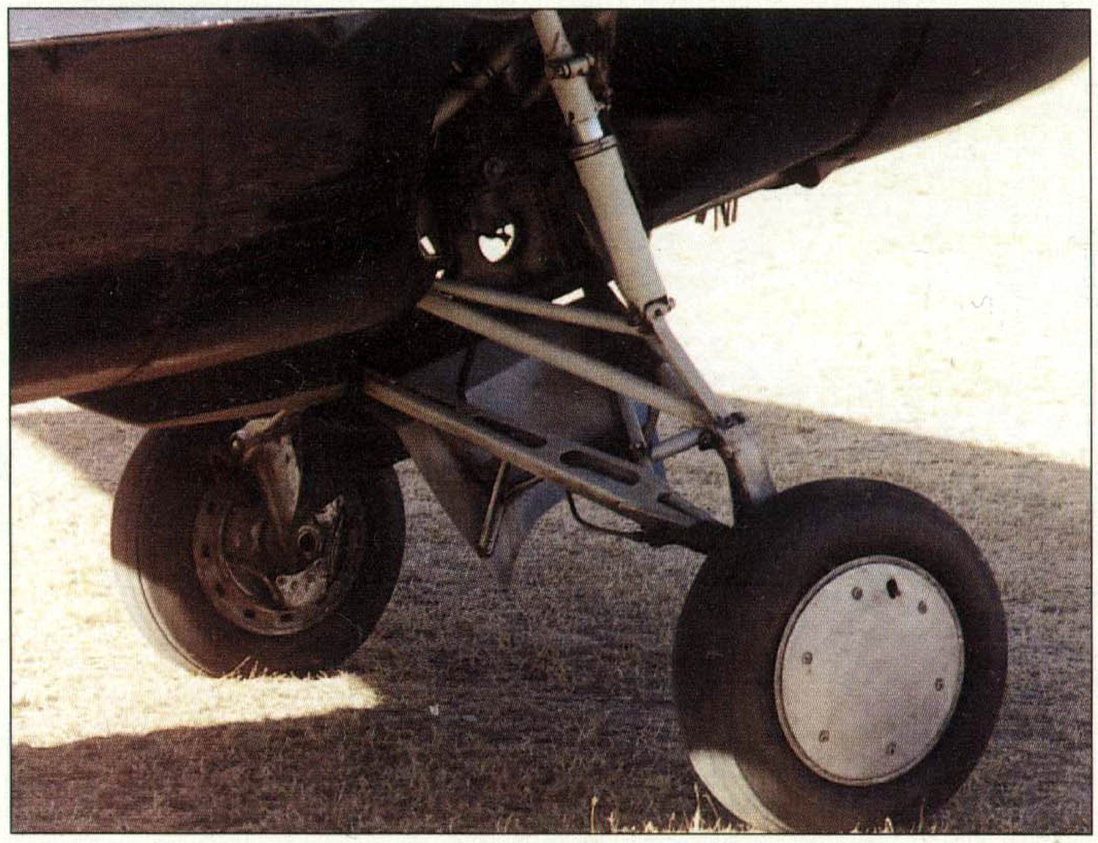
I am in the process of building the Sword 1/48 scale Grumman/General Motors FM-2 Wildcat/Martlet Mk VI. Without wishing to wrongly criticise the model out of hand, I remember seeing a review of the kit, (a couple of years ago in a UK modelling magazine), which questioned the height and/or shape of the fin and rudder. Did the 'hobbyworld' ever resolve this query?

Enclosed are some photos I took of the real thing at the (then) Confederate, (now Commemorative), Air Force Air Display in October 2002. The tan coloured object taped to the rudder is a standard 12 inch ruler, provided for scale. If any reader can help I would be much obliged, before I take modelling knife to plastic! AM

Lester To wisend
El Paso, Texas, USA











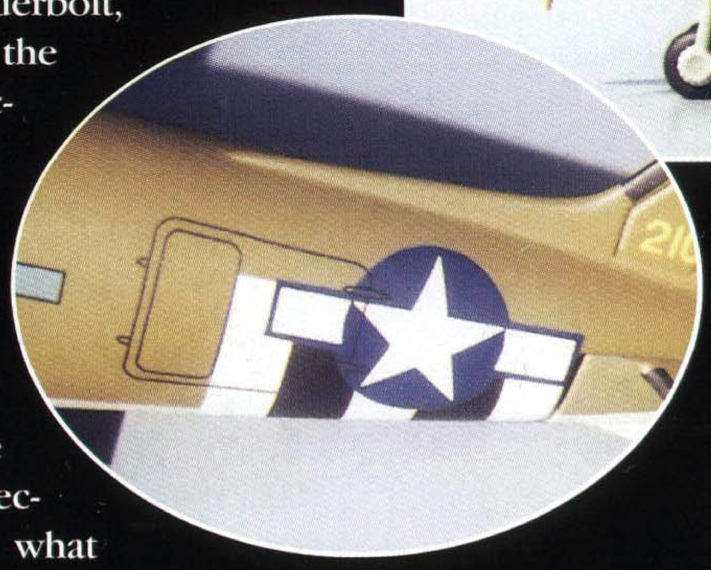
D-Day Heavy Metal

The diecast scale model scene

Des Knock looks at the latest Corgi diecast model releases commemorating the 60th Anniversary of D-Day

MANY AIRCRAFT TYPES WERE USED DURING THIS momentous invasion of France in June 1944 and to recognise the contribution made by the USAAF and the RAF, I have brought together several of the latest additions to Corgi's Aviation Archive series. Thus here you will find the Douglas C-47 Skytrain, P-47D Thunderbolt, P-51D Mustang, Mosquito, Spitfire, and the B-24 Liberator. In fact this varied collection serves well to demonstrate one of the key aspects of the success of the Allies, namely their use of aircraft appropriate for the job in hand. So the American Liberator was supplied to RAF Coastal Command, whilst conversely the Mosquito and Spitfire were loaned to the USAAF and US Navy respectively. But enough of this preamble, what about the diecast model themselves?







In the early hours of 6 June 1944 an aerial armada swooped over France to deliver its precious cargo of armed fighting men and the right tool for this job was the Douglas C-47 Dakota. In recognition of this, Corgi have produced a 1/144 scale representation of this as a 60th Anniversary D-Day Aviation Set (AA99148) in which you find the C-47 together with a fighter escort of a P-47D Thunderbolt and P-51D Mustang.



With such a collection it's difficult to know where to begin but with no thought of priority there is the Long Beach built Douglas C-47 *'Lilly Bell III'* representing an aircraft of the 438th Troop Carrier Group, based at RAF Greenham Common, a Group that consisted of the 87th, 88th, 89th, and 90th Squadrons. These became part of the 9th Air Force in February 1944 and were destined for service either dropping paratroops or towing gliders. And I have to say that the Corgi version really captures the classic lines of the C-47 in its Olive Drab and Neutral Gray finish, with its nose legend *'Lilly Bell II'* complemented by the finely detailed airframe and cargo door.

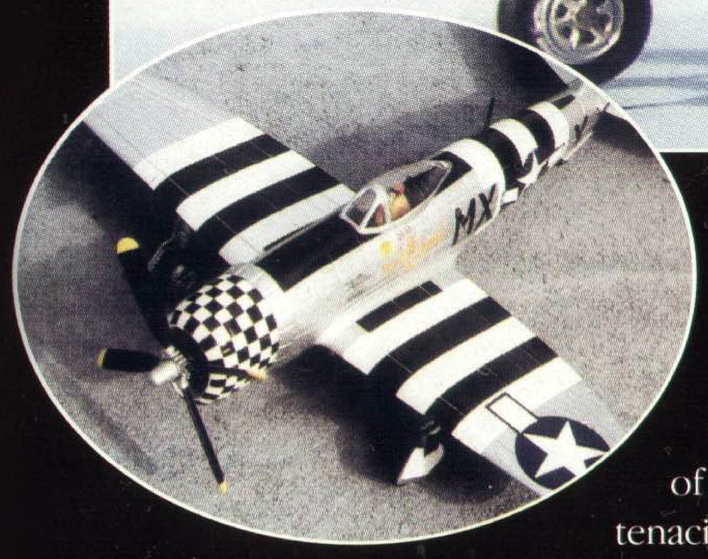
The effect is greatly enhanced by the black and white invasion stripes on the lower fuselage and an optional undercarriage, which can be used to show it off unless you use the enclosed display stand. This latter item comes as standard and is a mixed medium composite of metal and plastic, the base emblazoned with its limited edition serial, (which in this case is 675 of 4000 produced).

By June 1944, the German Luftwaffe was much diminished but still possessed a potent element and to counter this, fighter aircraft were deployed in both the escort and ground attack roles. The P-47D Thunderbolt was an important part of this so here we find the C-47 being escorted by *'Oregons Brittania'* or *'Happy Warrior'*, the last P-47 issued to Hub Zemke before he left the 56th FG to become CO of the 479th FG. This particular aircraft was one of the best-known War Bond subscription aircraft to reach the European Theatre of Operations. Zemke scored six 'kills' in this prior to his departure, although it was also flown by Harold Comstock from Boxted in support of the D-Day Landings. This model is equally well made, exhibiting the 'Happy Warrior' and 'Oregons Brittania' legends, on the basic airframe featuring a good camouflage scheme and invasion stripes making for an excellent model in its own right.



Of course for many, the best fighter aircraft of WW II was the P-51D Mustang, and this is represented by a diminutive version that is a super replica complete with fine detailing. Piloted by William T Kemp of the 375th FS/361st

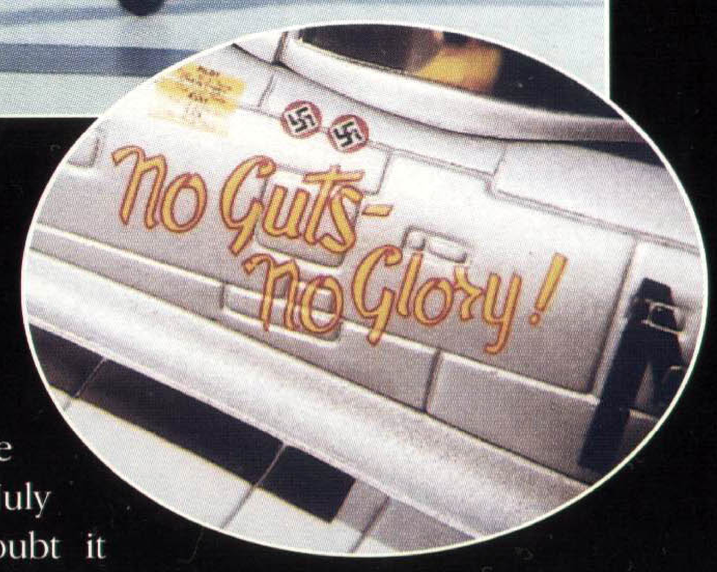




FG 1944, *'Betty Lee III'* gscored six air-to-air victories whilst with the 361st FG. One result of Kemp's courage and tenacity was the award of the Distinguished Service Cross for his defence of bomber aircraft during air combats in June/July over Normandy. On one occasion, despite only having three machine guns operable, he was able to get within 15 yards of his adversary before bringing him down.

So taken overall the Corgi D-Day Set is something very special particularly if you prefer smaller scale models (1/144th) and when set upon their respective display stands the trio make for an especially impressive vista. Dimensions of the aircraft are 199mm, 77mm and 85mm for the C-47, P-51 and P-47 respectively.

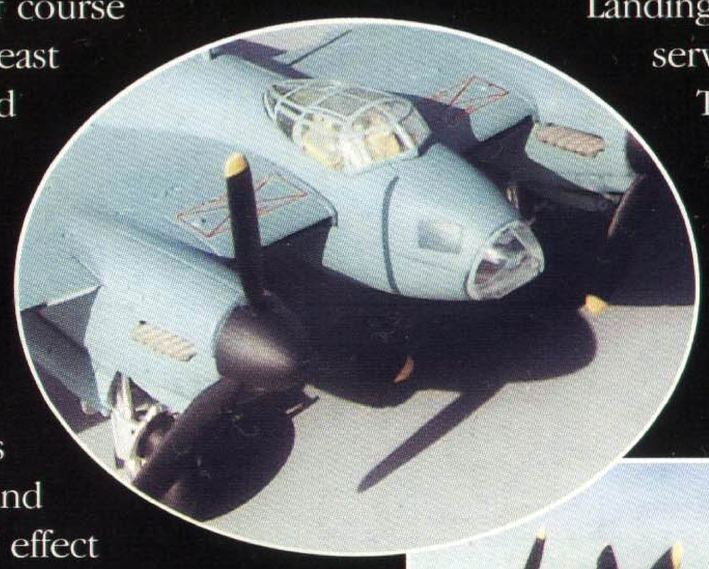
Another P-47D Thunderbolt, but somewhat larger in 1/72 scale, is *'No Guts No Glory'*, (AA 33806), the mount of Lt/Col Ben Mayo, Commanding Officer of the 82nd FS/78TH FG, based at Duxford in 1944. The squadron was originally equipped with P-38s but these were replaced by the 'Jug' which must have been quite a transition process! This model from the Aviation Archive is a fantastic rendition of the type with wonderful panel detailing, alternative undercarriage arrangement and chequered engine cowling, resplendent in its black and white invasion stripes. Of course even at this scale the dimensions of the beast are singularly impressive with its Pratt and Whitney R-2800-59W Double Wasp 2,535hp engine producing a maximum speed of around 426 mph. Add to that its devastating eight 0.50 inch machine guns, which in the hands of the aces of the time really struck hard against the might of the Luftwaffe. The model features a combined metal and plastic display stand which means you can show it off to good effect in all its *'No Guts No Glory'* livery. (175mm wingspan).

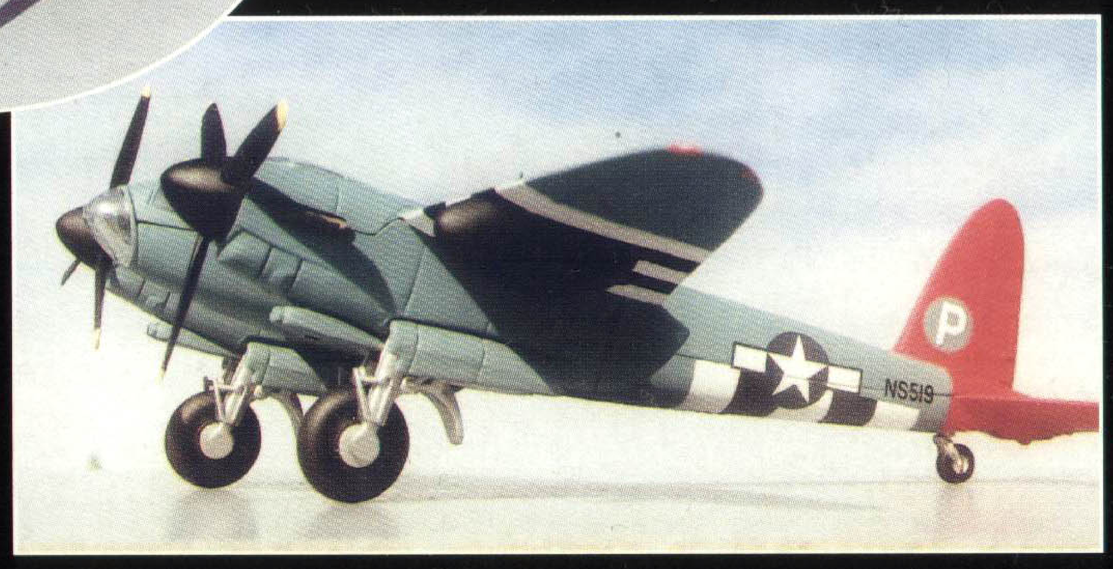


The wonderful example here is one of two supplied for the 'Frantic Joe Shuttle' which took place between 21 June and 5 July 1944, although no doubt it was usefully applied over Northern France during the D-Day Landing on 6 June too. The colour scheme is enhanced from its overall PR Blue RAF delivery scheme with a bright red tail/rudder assembly; not forgetting the imposing invasion stripes, which really makes this model stand out from the crowd!

The reconnaissance cameras were located in the under fuselage and there appear to be five camera ports indicated on the finely detailed airframe. Slipper fuel tanks mounted on each wing leading edge extended the effective range of the Mosquito, which in combination with its high turn of speed made it a tough bird to catch, which was just as well given its total lack of armament. The Corgi version of the USAAF 653rd BS/25th BG 325 Photographic Wing PR Mk XIX, is produced in 1/72 scale and the whole plot is very impressive, (230mm wingspan), from the fine fuselage details, through to the aircrew figures, the optional position undercarriage assembly, and the display stand.

Whilst on the subject of reconnaissance for the D-Day Landings, some RAF Spitfires were impressed into service, and flown by pilots of, the US Navy. This came about because of the need to have accurate spotting for the fall of shot fired by US Navy warships as they pounded the beachhead defences. The aircrew used in this process were US Naval aviators assigned the task and operated with units from both the Fleet Air Arm and the





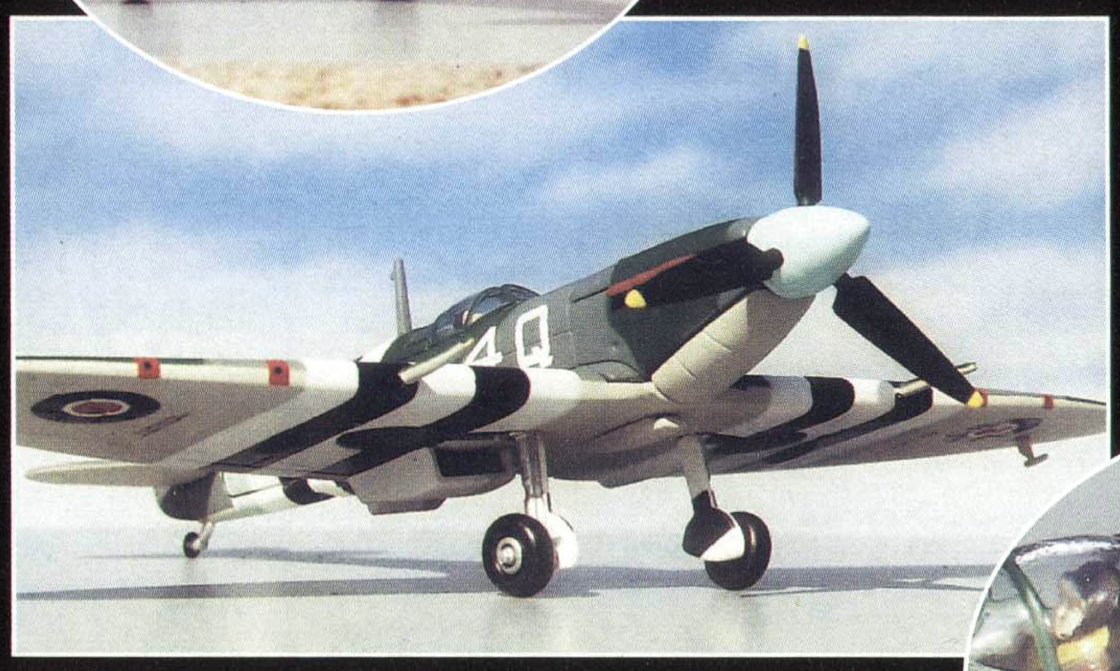
One of the key assets necessary to a successful military operation is access to accurate and up to date information and one of the means available to gather this intelligence is to send someone over enemy territory to take photographs. The RAF already had their own dedicated Photo Reconnaissance aircraft, in suitably modified versions of the Spitfire and Mosquito, and it was this latter type that found itself impressed into the service of the USAAF.

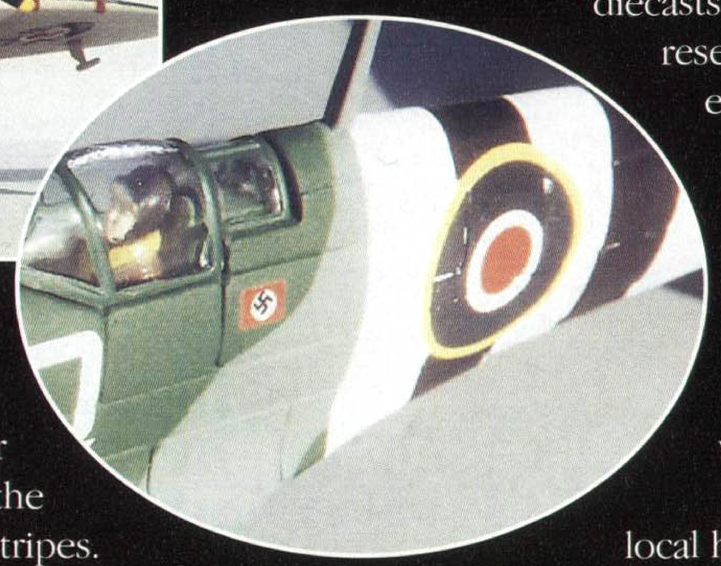
RAF from D-Day to 26 June.

The ideal mount for this task with high speed, agility and defensive capability was the Spitfire Mk Vb which formed a provisional squadron designated VCS-7. This arrangement lasted until after the fall of Cherbourg when the Spits were returned to their former owners, (probably reluctantly), losing but one aircraft during this tour of duty.



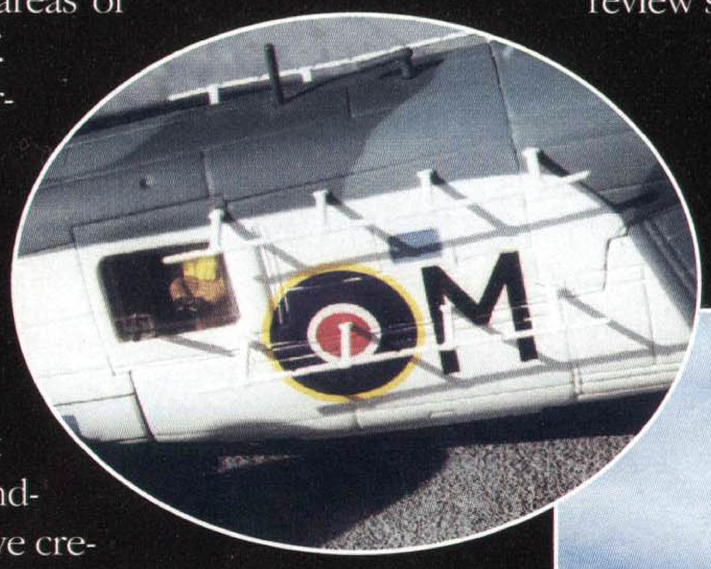
The Corgi Supermarine Spitfire Mk Vb, coded 4Q of VCS-7, US Navy (Cruiser Scouting Squadron), June 1944, is a singularly impressive diecast, (156mm wingspan), due in no small measure to its excellent camouflage colour scheme of Dark Green/Ocean Grey upper surfaces and Medium Sea Grey undersides and the contrasting high visibility black and white invasion stripes. Add to this the classic elliptical wing, finely detailed airframe, alternate landing gear, pilot figure, and a display stand, it all adds up to a brilliant offering and by far my favourite, but we all have our own bias, *(caveat emptor!)*.





The support provided by the other RAF elements such as Bomber Command did much to disrupt the flow of reinforcements behind the enemy front lines and by doing so ensured the Panzer Divisions when finally unleashed were constrained in their actions. But even further afield, other four-engined 'heavies' were making an equally useful contribution and this was in the coastal areas of the UK and into the Atlantic itself.

To achieve this, there were aircraft such as the long-legged Short Sunderland as well as those provided by the United States, one of which was the Consolidated Liberator. This confronted the 'Grey Wolf' menace head-on and as a result kept them well away from the landing beaches where they could have created havoc if left unchecked. Sea and air patrols were stepped up to provide almost continuous cover and force the U-Boats to submerge and reduce their combat effectiveness. It was this contribution that made the task easier for sea traffic to traverse the channel unmolested.



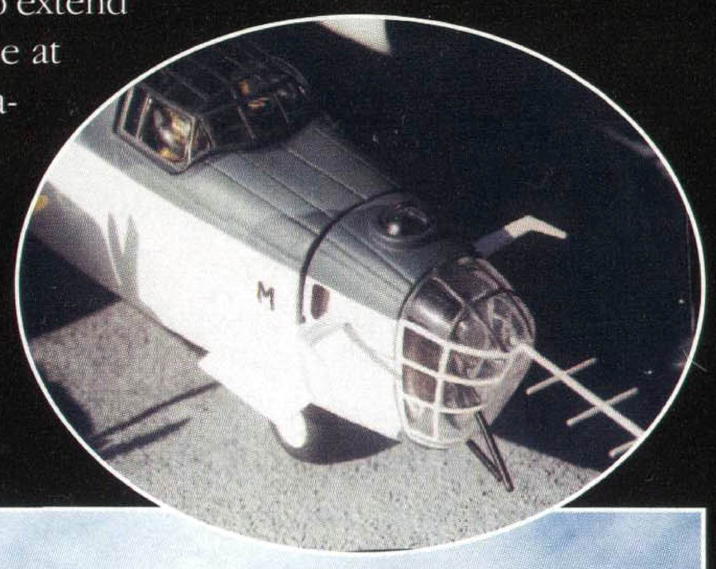
Air superiority was the key to this and by June 1944 the Allies were able to deliver this protection and so any threat from Axis forces was nullified. The contributions made by Coastal Command and the Fleet Air Arm were essential parts of the overall plan, and happily one of the latest additions to the Corgi line up just happens to be one of these!

The aircraft featured is a Liberator GR Mk I as operated by No 120 Squadron, Coastal Command, when it was based in Aldegrove (Ireland) during 1944. As you would expect with a diecast model this size, (460mm), it is a heavyweight, quite literally, and it is a handful to carry, a task made even more difficult by the number of ASV Mk II anti-submarine radar antenna arrays distributed over the superbly detailed airframe. Included are crew figures that really look the business with one proviso, and this concerns the two waist gunners. Call me 'picky' but they stand there with hands in front as they should be when operating the machine guns, but unfortunately the guns are nowhere near so they tend to look a tad odd. Another 'nit pick' could be the serial number, FK228, which on the photo I saw of the same aircraft, ('Aggressors' Volume 4 - Patrol Aircraft' p60-61), has it more aft. But as I say this is being very fussy and overall the impression is one of high detail and quality, which you should expect at this price anyway.

Hopefully the accompanying pictures will add some flesh to the text and you may now realise what great diecasts these are and at these prices representing significant value for money especially for the ardent collector. All come packaged in excellent presentation boxes that feature images of the models, digitally enhanced, as is clear with the rotating propellers, and of these the Spitfire box is really very good.

All should be available in your local hobby shop by the time this issue of 'MAM' is published, but for more information you could check out the Corgi website on www.corgi.co.uk. Retail prices are as £39.99 for the D-Day Aviation Set (AA99148), £24.99 for the P-47 (AA33806), £34.99 for the Mosquito (AA32807), £24.99 for the Spitfire (AA34602), and £99.99 for the Liberator (AA34005).

It only remains for me to extend my appreciation to those at Redbrick Communications and Corgi for the review samples. AM





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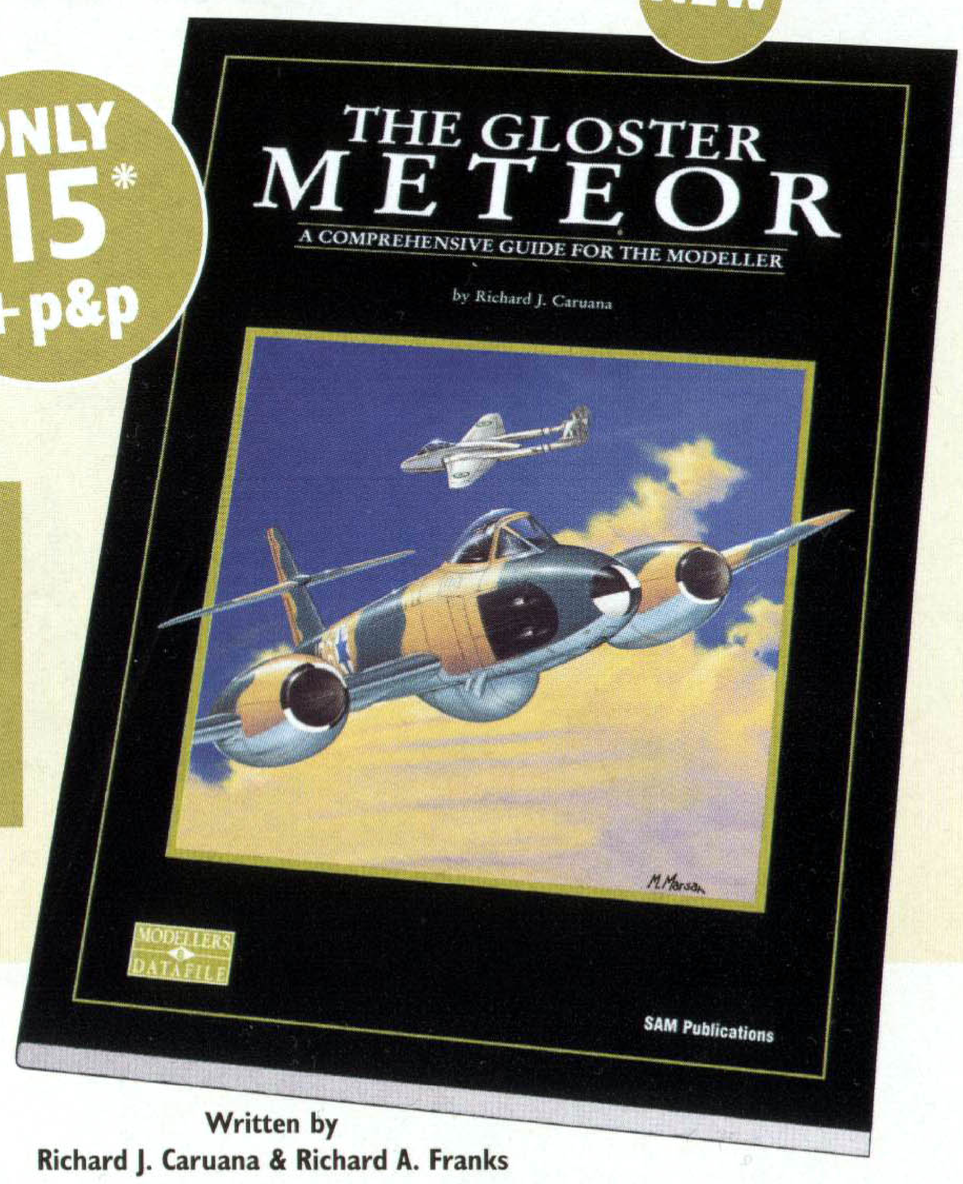
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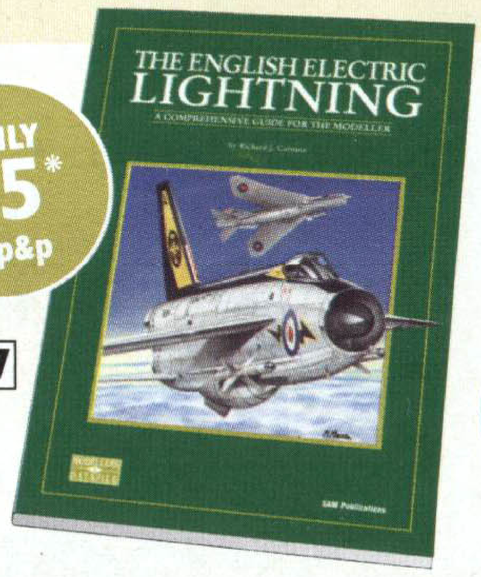
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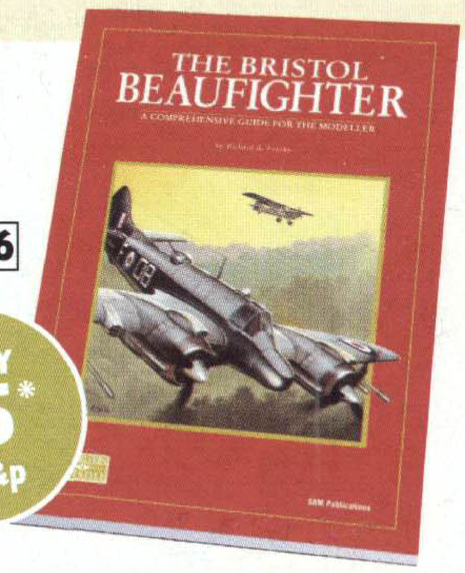
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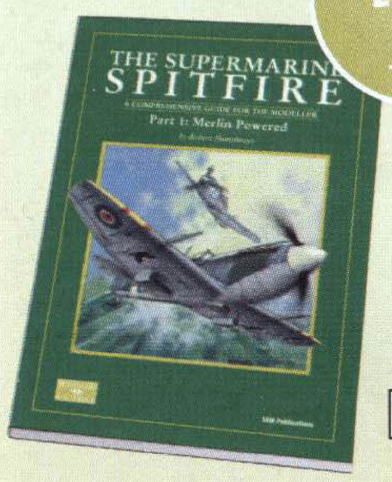
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MAM–0604

Club Scene

In this first trial feature where modelling clubs and societies are invited to write about their local club or branch, Kev Baxter, Secretary of the St Edmundsbury Scale Modellers' Club, starts the ball rolling



The 'Usual Suspects' - the backbone of every club

SOME WEEKS AGO, AFTER HAVING JUST TAKEN UP HIS new appointment, 'MAM's new Editor visited the St Edmundsbury Scale Modellers' Club. We had invited him down to watch a slide presentation by one of our members and as Secretary, it was my job to write about that in our newsletter, which led to the conversation in which the Editor had this 'great idea' about introducing an occasional column about model clubs and branches written by model club members around the world!

The St Edmundsbury Scale Modellers is a fairly young club having been formed in 1997. On average the attendance is about twelve or so members who represent a typically diverse cross-section of age and occupations including a salesman, a surveyor, an air traffic controller, some retired gentlemen and someone working in the NHS. Also reflected in the Club are the diverse interests held outside modelling from a golfer and guitarist to a former amateur motorcycle racer and a private pilot.

Although the Club is not directly affiliated to the International Plastic Modellers Society, (IPMS), roughly 30% of our membership are also IPMS members, and three different IPMS(UK) SIGs are represented - the FAA SIG, the WWII Japanese SIG and the Aerobatic SIG, the latter two represented by the actual SIG leaders.

The cross-section of models features all types, however, in an area steeped in the history of the 'Mighty Eighth' it is not surprising that there is a tendency towards aviation related subjects. Nevertheless, everyone's creations are warmly welcomed in the 'Show and Tell' part of the







From left to right:

1 Dom Stevenson, Milton Keynes Show 2004

2 Ian Balch takes time out from designing gardens to show us a couple of his big fighters

3 Diversity personified, founder member Rod Jones poses with a selection of his models

4 Treasurer David Leeder, with more Jags than Mr Prescott!

5 Club Chairman Stu Clark with a selection of his splendid 1/48 scale fighters

BELOW Dave Leeders' 1/72 scale Tamiya F-84G





Geoff Hewett's 1/72 Academy Fortress Mk.I



A selection of Bob Trimnell's P-51s and some opposition. He is not as impressed as we were!





evening and quarterly competitions help to foster a desire for improvement in everyone's work, especially since the three leaders on points at the end of the year are presented with modelling vouchers for the local model shop.

Guest speakers make regular appearances to talk on a variety of topics and this, it is hoped, inspires the members to possibly think outside their usual specialisations and explore fresh, to them, modelling avenues. Two of the competitions a year are themed and this certainly helps to diversify the members' repertoire and they are a lot of fun.

An active core of the membership attends many model shows throughout the year and also they have attended non-model related shows in East Anglia such as Boxted, Debach and Old Buckenham Open Days, which helps to take the hobby to many who may dismiss it as silly plastic 'toys for boys'. Indeed, it is the reaction of the public to the sheer virtuosity of the modelling skills displayed at these shows that provides a great source of satisfaction for the modellers.

This leads me very nicely on to an unrepentant 'plug' for our own show. Considering the rich wartime history of the area, East Anglia is relatively poorly served in the modelling community for clubs and shows. It has been the aim of the St Edmunsdbury Club to fill this gap and to provide a show worthy of the East Anglian name.

Previous years have seen the club dogged by a lack of suitably sized and priced venues close to the town, therefore the Club has decided to take heed of the cramped exhibitors, hang the expense and go 'Sports Hall'! Sunday, September 26 2004, will see us all at the Bury St Edmunds Sports & Leisure Centre. Whether you want to see every 8th AF B-17 Bomb Group or P-51 Fighter Group represented in scale, superb helicopters, racing cars, WWII fighters, a myriad of aerobatic aeroplanes, Japanese aircraft or Fleet Air Arm types, don't hesitate, come along to the show. And that will only be our Club's efforts. Traders and other clubs and SIGs will also be well represented to help make it a great day out and a show representing what this hobby is all about.

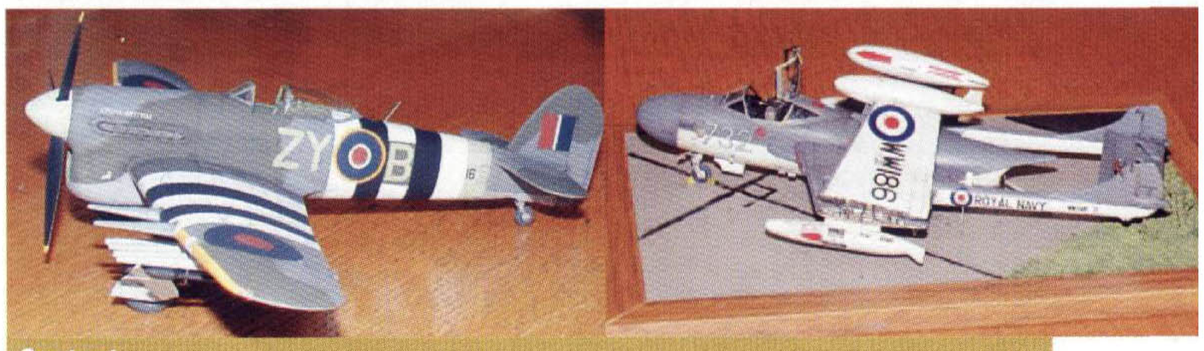
Sadly our funds only stretch to one 'jolly' per year, and that's this July; a trip to the RAF Museum at Hendon followed by the Mosquito Aircraft Museum... and perhaps a curry on the way home!



LEFT Members Ray and Joel Challenor take time off from the Aerobatic SIG stand and winning prizes in the junior group to appreciate Bob Trimnel's P-51s at our 2003 show

BELOW LEFT Stu Clark's 1/48 Hasegawa Typhoon Ib

BELOW RIGHT Kev Baxter's 1/72 Frog Sea Venom FAW.21 (see article in this issue)



Contact

If you live close to us and want to enjoy the company of like-minded modellers in a warm, friendly atmosphere, or even if you don't and just fancy a pint in the bar by yourself, you'll be made more than welcome on the second Wednesday of each month at the Community Centre, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. To find us call Stu Clark or Kev Baxter on 01284 750235 or 01473 832163 respectively.

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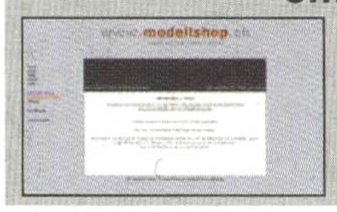
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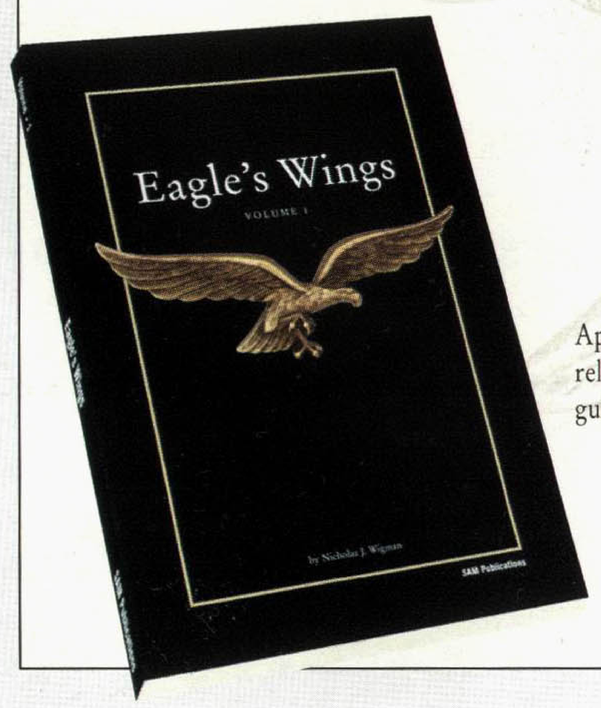
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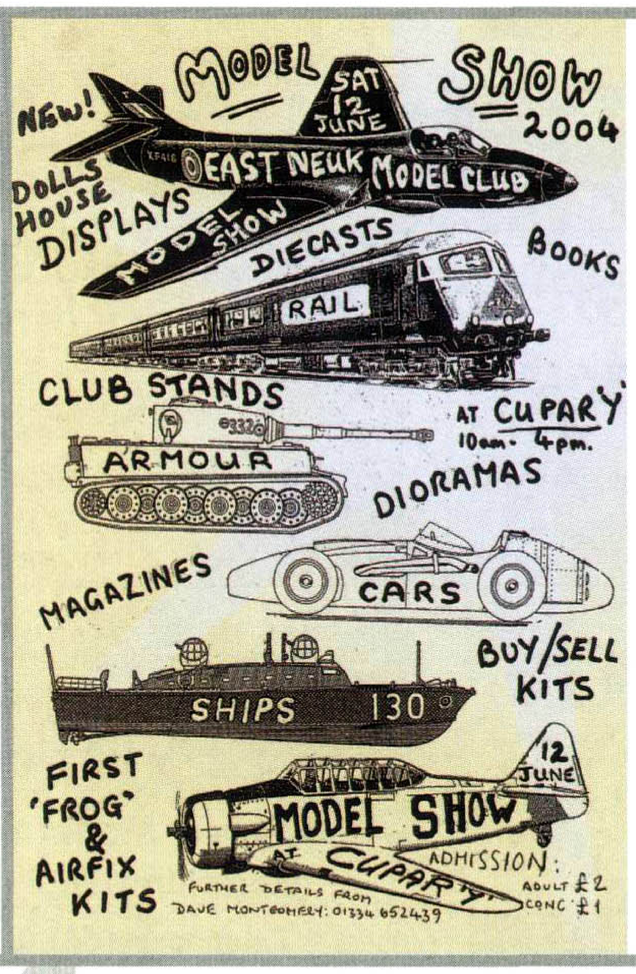
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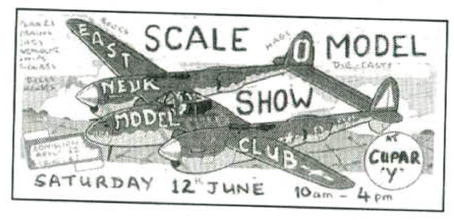
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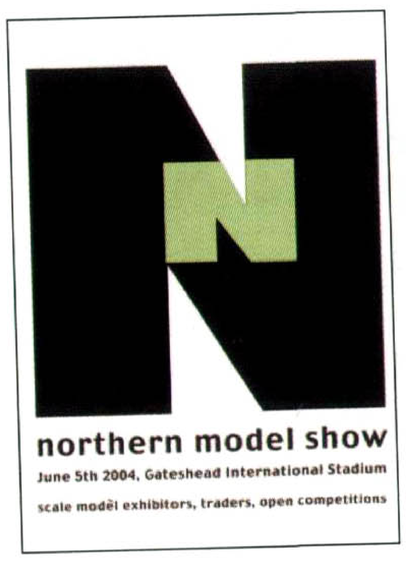
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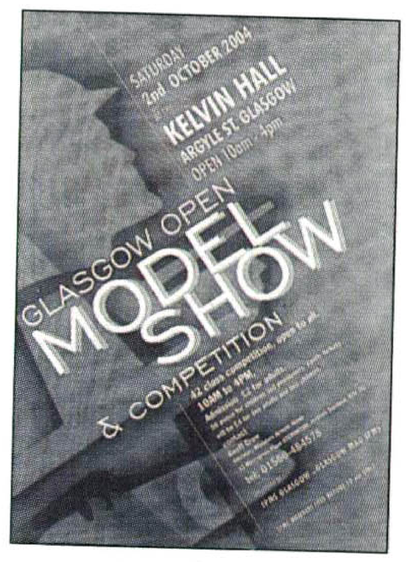
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Saturday 2 October 2004

'Glasgow Open Model Show'

To be held at the **Kelvin Hall, Argyle Street, Glasgow**
Open 10.00am to 4.00pm. Admission: Adults £2.00; Children and OAPs 50p; Family ticket £4.00; IPMS Members FREE before 10.00am ONLY.
42 Class modelling competition - open to all.
Contact: Geoff Crow, 13 Merrygreen Place, Stewarton, Ayeshire KA3 5EJ, Scotland. tel **01560 484578**



Sunday 10 October 2004

IPMS Lincoln 'Expo 2004' Model Show

To be held at the **Grandstand, Southwell Racecourse, Southwell**
Open 10.00am to 4.30pm. Free admission.
Club displays, Trade stands, 30 Class Model Competition, On-site catering. Free Parking
Contact: Steve Hesse, 31 Arboretum Avenue, Lincoln, LN2 5JE. tel **01522 541146**

Sunday 7 November 2004

'Elsecar Model Show'

To be held at the **Elsecar Heritage Centre, Wath Road, Elsecar, Barnsley**
Open 10.00am to 4.30pm. Entrance: Adults £2.00; Children and Senior Citizens £1.00. Family ticket £5.00
Club displays, Trade stands, Model Competition, On-site catering, Free Parking
Contact: Martin Blundell on tel **01226 753649** or Roger Evans on **01226 203784**
Lots to see and do on the Elsecar Heritage Centre site - a day out for ALL the family!

Saturday 20/Sunday 21 November 2004

THE BIG ONE! – 'Scale Modelworld'

Home of the IPMS(UK) National Championships, hosted by the International Plastic Modellers' Society (UK)

Held at the **Telford International Centre, Telford, Shropshire**
Open 10.00am to 5.00pm - both days. Sponsored by The Aviation Hobby Shop and Midland Counties Publications.
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For more information email <publicity@ipms-uk.co.uk> or visit the IPMS(UK) website www.ipms-uk.co.uk

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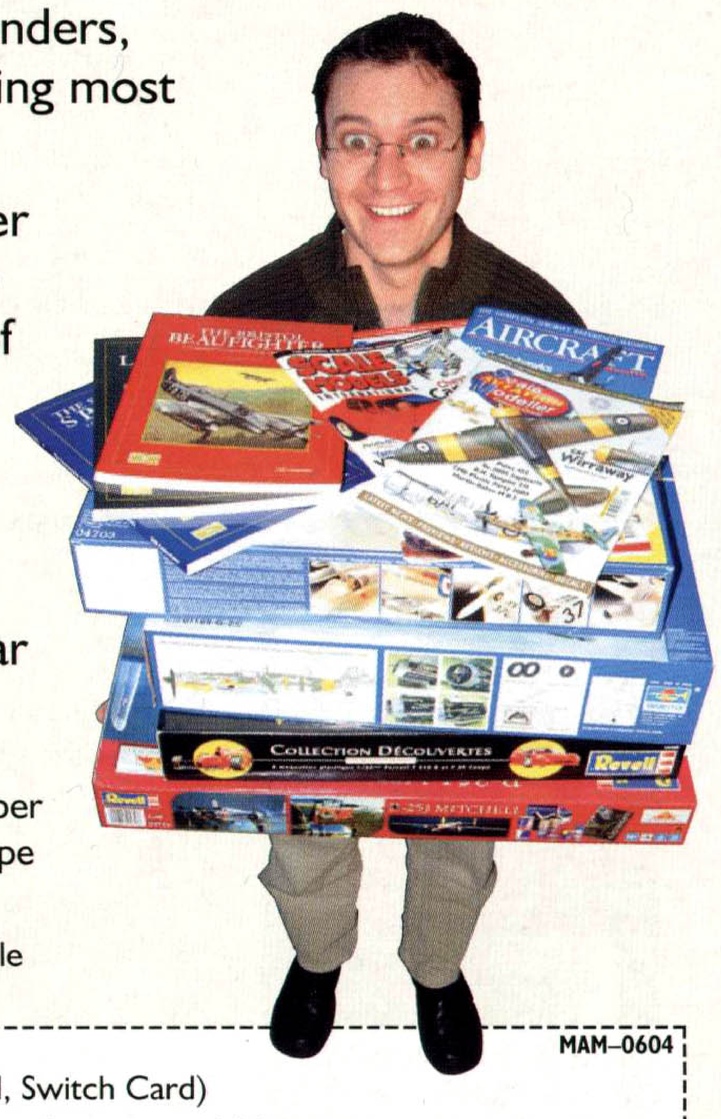
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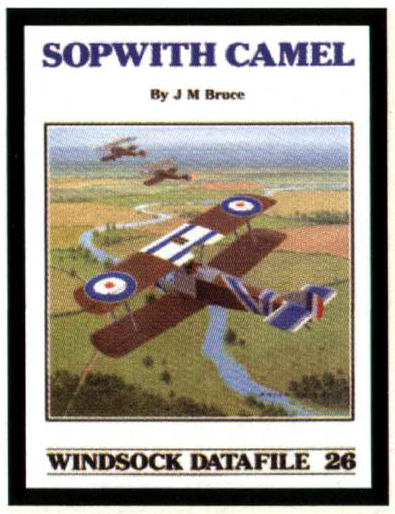
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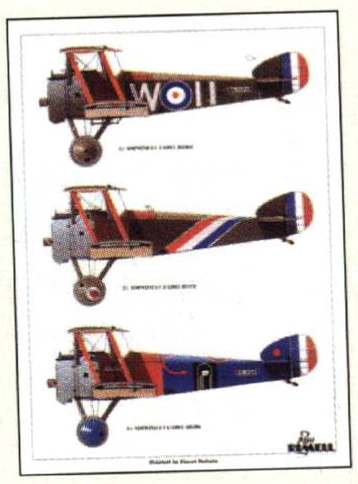
Windsock Datafile 26
by Jack Bruce
Albatros Productions Ltd
UK price £12.00

Sopwith Camel

This is a reprint of Datafile 26, last issued over a decade ago. The reason for its release is obvious to World War One modellers; it is the promised release of a large number of Camel variants in kit form.



Because of the time lapse, there must be a large number of enthusiasts and modellers that have never seen this Datafile, something you need to do if you are considering building one of the new kits.



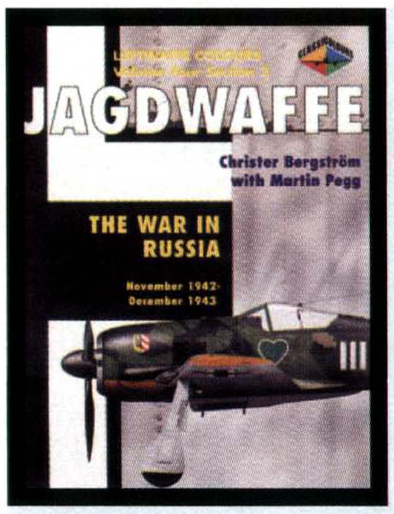
Typical of these monographs, there is a brief introduction to the type, but the meat is the large number of photographs, complete with massive captions. Many of them are extremely clear considering their age, in fact the full-page image on p1 could have been taken yesterday.

I build quite a few biplanes and I would be lost when it came to rigging without my Datafile collection. Once you have seen any of this series you will appreciate their value. They always carry 1/72 and 1/48 scale drawings; in this case as well as the F.1 there is a three-view drawing of the 'taper wing' Camel and a cutaway of the standard machine.

Also included is a 'detail section' of some six pages, giving us close ups of the cockpit area and many small external features. To complete the monograph, we get three colour profiles with varied colour schemes.

If you missed it last time this is your second chance, don't miss it!

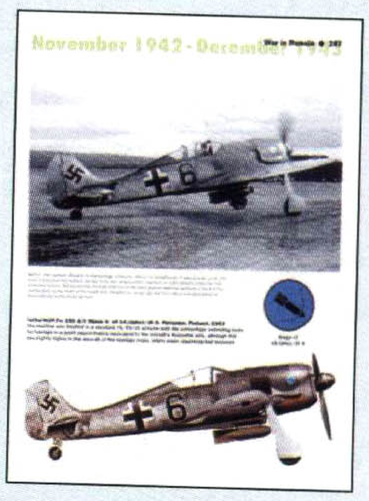
Ernie Lee



Classic Colours
Volume 4 Section 3
'The war in Russia,
November 1942 -
December 1943'
by Christer Bergström
with Martin Pegg
Ian Allan Publishing
UK price £14.95

Jagdwaffe

This latest volume in the 'Jagdwaffe' series covers *Luftwaffe* fighters in Russia when the Soviet Union was starting to get the upper hand. Attrition was taking its toll, and even with the introduction of the Focke Wulf Fw 190 with its superior firepower, the writing was on the wall.





This volume features the usual mix of operational history, brief monographs of well known pilots, colour profiles and lots of photographs to back up the colour schemes. There is more written about *Luftwaffe* camouflage than that of any other nation - and there is still not enough! It seems to me that every individual German fighter, particularly so the Bf 109 and Fw 190, had a different scheme. This makes it virtually impossible to paint a model without photographic evidence.

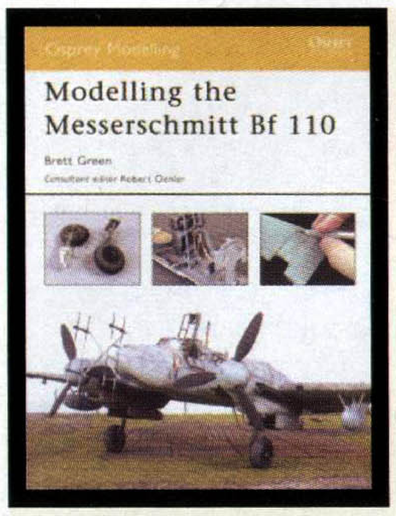
To this end, this book has twenty-five colour profiles and most of them have some sort of anomaly. Here are some examples and the first one is a gem. It is a Fw 190A-5 of 5./JG 54 in the summer of 1943. The aircraft was originally finished in RLM 74/75/76. The undersides remained RLM 76, but the upper fuselage and wings were over-sprayed in a Russian theatre two-tone green scheme with a little of the RLM 76 showing on the cowling. Also, on the upper fuselage are irregular patches of sand! The *Gruppe* and *Geschwader* badges have been painted out and the yellow Eastern Front marking on the rudder is restricted to the lower portion.

Another example, is a Fw 190A-5 of 1./JG 54 which has the 'two greens' camouflage but instead of irregular patches, the ones on this machine are angular, even though they are still sprayed on freehand.

Bf 109s do not seem to have such exotic schemes, but even with these you need to study the colour profile and photographs. For instance a Bf 109G-6 of IV/JG 54 has been re-sprayed with the two greens over RLM 74/75 and, over that a, temporary white finish! This is very badly worn and to top it off the canopy framing is in the original RLM 74/75.

This is another excellent addition to the 'Jagdwaffe' series and honestly if you paint a model of a *Luftwaffe* fighter on the Eastern Front without this book, you do so at your own peril!

Ernie Lee



Osprey Modelling
by Brett Green
Osprey Publishing
UK price £12.99

Modelling the Messerschmitt Bf 110

'How to' modelling books are always a problematical genre of books to market and 'sell' to a critical modelling public, but I really liked this one. Honest!!

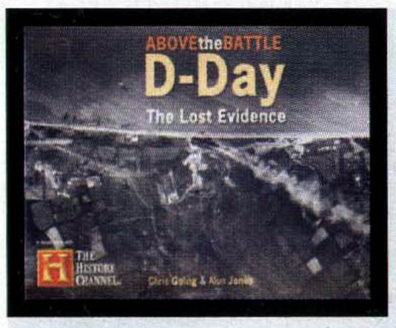
Authored by Brett Green, the energetic editor of the very popular Hyperscale online model magazine, who is an exceptionally skilled modeller in his own right, (and one of the nicest human beings you could ever wish to meet), the book takes you through several 1/48 scale Bf 110 modelling projects, each subsequent one being more involved or requiring more advanced modelling skills than the previous one.

It is obvious that Brett knows his subject well, and the choices of individual aircraft subject matter, plus the corrections and improvements to the basic kits, (Fujimi, Revell, Monogram and Pro Modeller), to arrive at them is fascinating and well worth knowing and keeping as an enduring reference, even if you model in a scale other than 1/48th, for when you decide to tackle the Messerschmitt Bf 110 yourself.

A table of Further Reading, Media and Websites is included at the back of the book, together with lists of decals and accessories, to round off a thoroughly well-researched, executed and compiled guide to modelling the Bf 110. It does what it says on the front cover!

Recommended to anyone contemplating building a Messerschmitt Bf 110, in any scale, now or in the future!

Neil Robinson



by Chris Going
and Alun Jones
Crecy Publishing
UK price £16.95

'Above the Battle - D-Day The lost Evidence'

We have in the past, (and I am sure in this particular 60th Anniversary year will in the future), get many books dedicated to this subject, but I doubt if there will be many exactly like this one.

This is the story of D-Day told by the use of aerial photography! On that confusing day, this was the only way the Allies could get a clear idea of what was going on and what progress, if any, had been made.



The book is arranged so that the reader can zero-in on a particular area of action without ploughing through a large amount of text to find the piece they are interested in. For instance an early chapter covers fortifications and then each beach is shown separately as it was immediately before the landings. To help you familiarise yourself with the location of each one, there is a map of the area which spans two pages.

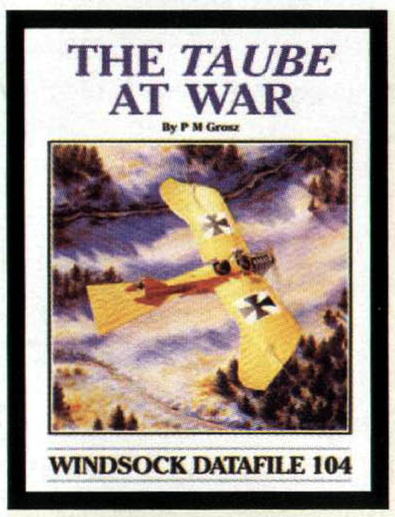
The next section illustrates areas that were 'softened up' prior to D-Day. The next, and by far the largest section covers all the action on 6 June, be it from the sea or from the air. Each point of conflict is dealt with separately. First the airborne landings, followed by the assault on the beaches and lastly the Mulberry Harbours and the supply organisation.

Although most of the photographs are aerial ones there are some ground shots, plus a few diagrams and artwork to complete the story.

This is a complex and difficult operation to describe, but don't think it is just a series of photographs - apart from the informative captions there are some fascinating quotes from people there 'on the ground'.

This 144pp hardback is a most welcome addition to the bookshelf of any student of World War Two history.

Ernie Lee

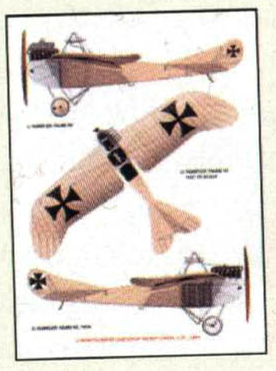


Windsock Datafile 104
by P M Grosz
Albatros Productions Ltd
UK price £10.00

The Taube at War

I have been waiting for a monograph such as this for some time, as I was 'sitting' on the Pegasus kit. Now I wish that I hadn't! This book has opened my eyes somewhat. It seems that 'Taube' was a wing shape, designed by Igo Etrich, and not an actual aeroplane.

A number of companies used the wing design, but with their own fuselages etc. Thus we have an Albatros 'Taube', a Casper 'Taube', a DFW 'Taube', an Euler 'Taube', a Goedecker 'Taube', a Gotha 'Taube', a Rumpler 'Taube 'and so on, you get the message!



Some were fitted with ailerons, whilst the bulk of them used wing warping. Engines and undercarriages varied and also the tailplane. So you see you cannot possibly build a 'Taube' without a reference such as this.

As always there is a brief history of the aircraft, or should I say 'the design', and there are many photographs illustrating the variations. The scale drawings, in both 1/72 and 1/48, are for the Jeannin and the Rumpler 'Taube' and there are representative drawings of the DFW and Goedecker 'Taubes', plus a full colour 3-view of a 1914 Rumpler Taube 4C.

As I said previously if you are building this machine it will be difficult without this monograph, and if you are just an aviation enthusiast, it has to be on your bookshelf.

As a footnote, despite this excellent book, I am still unsure exactly which 'Taube' the Pegasus kit represents – but I am sure that Chris Gannon will enlighten me when I next see him!

Ernie Lee



Mushroom Model Magazine Special
by Wojtek Matusiak
Mushroom Model Publications
UK price £12.99

Supermarine Spitfire Mk V

There can never be enough books on the Spitfire and its derivitives as far as I am concerned, and this latest coverage of the most numerous of Spitfire Marks, the Mk V, by the Anglo/Polish consortium is an an absolute cracker!

Published in their 'Yellow Series', the book follows previous publications in the range and briefly covers the development and production of the Mk V in its numerous and various sub-types, then goes on to detail the major RAF (and FAA) use, followed by a section on RAF (and FAA) camouflage and markings.

The Technical Description chapter comprises scale and sectional line drawings which will be very useful to the modeller, and no less than twenty countries that operated the Mk V are covered in the subsequent chapters, including camouflage and markings notes.

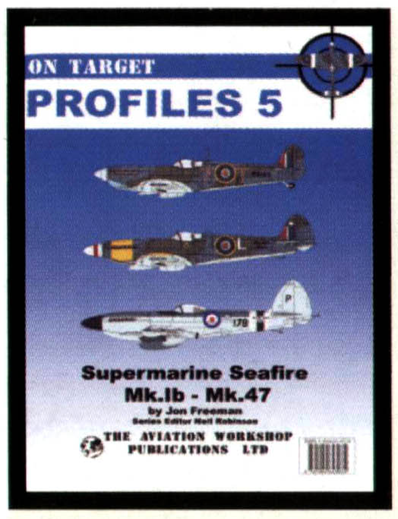
There are dozens of photographs included, most of the contemporary World War Two, b&w ones, you may have seen before, but there are still a good few that are new, which almost makes the book worth the asking price for these alone!

The 'colour section' includes close-up, detail photos, of a variety of preserved Spitfire Mk V examples, including a rather nice Mk Vc currently on display in a Yugoslavian aviation museum.

The colour artwork, by Robert Grudzien, is as always in these books, excellent, with forty-nine profiles, featuring a range of schemes and markings from air forces of different countries although the RAF, not unnaturally, predominates, plus two pages of camouflage pattern upper and under surface plan views.

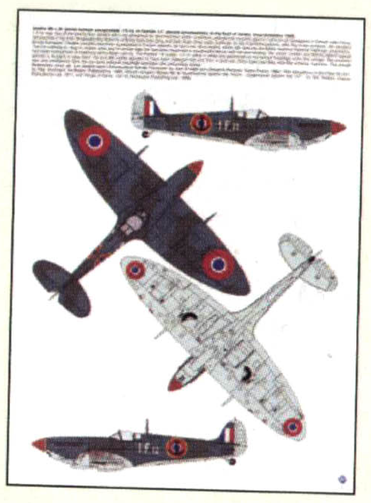
Highly recommended, even to grisled old Spitfire fans!

Neil Robinson



On Target PROFILES No 5
by Jon Freeman
Edited by Neil Robinson
Aviation Workshop Publications
UK price £12.99

Supermarine Seafire Mk Ib to Mk 47

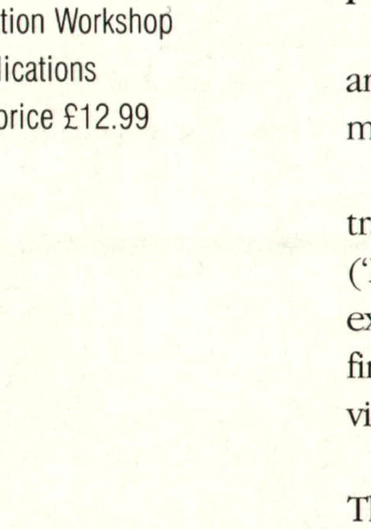


The Seafire always seems to have been missed out when it came to plastic kits, but if you look around this is actually not strictly true. For instance Octopus have just released a 1/72 scale Seafire Mk III and, would you believe that Czech Master Resins have no less than nine variants on their list! Airfix recently re-tooled their 1/48 scale Spitfire Mk Vb with optional Seafire parts and there are several resin Seafire conversion sets available, with one or two more in the pipe line, in 1/48 scale.

So you see this book is invalueable to the modeller, and if you have an academic interest in camouflage and markings, then you really are in for a treat!

As with all the other books in this series, it is illustrated by Jon Freeman and edited by Neil Robinson, ('MAM's new editor), and is packed full of interesting examples - all in full colour. In this 48pp book you will find twenty-two four-views and no less than seventy side view profiles.

With a book of this type, captions are everything. There is nothing more frustrating than an interesting scheme without the relevant historic and colour details. In this case the editor has gone overboard! Not only is each individual aircraft's unit, area of operation, colour scheme and markings details given, but also all the photo references used to produce the artwork.



As is becoming usual, this team have managed to indicate that there is virtually no such thing as a 'standard' scheme, at least not as far as unit markings are concerned. The codes come in a confusing variety of thick or thin strokes, large or small characters, in outline only or solid, and some of the National marking variations will certainly tax even an experienced modeller's spares box somewhat!

For instance, take the Seafire Mk L.IIc of the Fighter Flight, No 834 NAS, based at Puttalam, Ceylon, March 1944 illustrated on p9. This aircraft was painted in the RAF Day Fighter Scheme instead of the FAA Temperate Sea Scheme and the standard ETO roundels were overpainted with fresh matching camouflage colours and 16 inch diameter white and blue SEAC roundels were re-applied.

In fact it is surprising to realise just how many Seafires - (all Westland-built apparently) - were finished in the RAF Day Fighter Scheme of Dark Green/Ocean Grey/Medium Sea Grey instead of the official Fleet Air Arm Temperate Sea Scheme of Extra Dark Sea Grey/Dark Slate Grey/Sky - presumably to use up Westland's existing stocks of RAF paint!

There are so many fascinating illustrations in this book. Every page has a 'must model' example. For instance Seafires with cartoon artwork; full tail sections in primer paint; striped rudders; oversized roundels; replacement wings from different machines; coloured spinners; yellow ailerons/elevators and wing tips; and what about the Seafire Mk L.III on p38, still in the markings of No 767 NAS, RNAS Milltown, used in this guise by *Escadrille de Servitude 54.S*, aboard the aircraft carrier *Arromanches*, in mid-1947. A French unit flying in British markings - it's enough to make the paint peel! And these are just a few examples!

As well as Seafires in Fleet Air Arm service, Canadian Navy, French *AeroNavale*, Burmese and Irish Air Force operated aircraft all have their own sections.

Finally, a very useful full Seafire production list, with serial number allocations, is given at the back of the book.

I cannot see any self-respecting student of British aircraft, FAA enthusiast or modeller passing this one up. Recommended.

Ernie Lee

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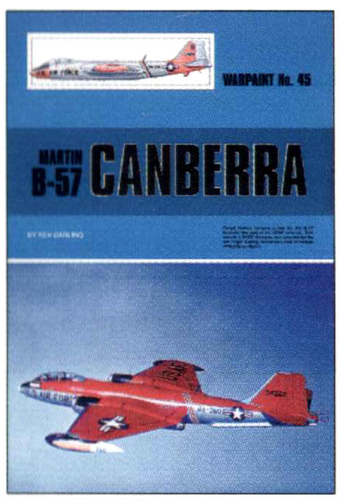
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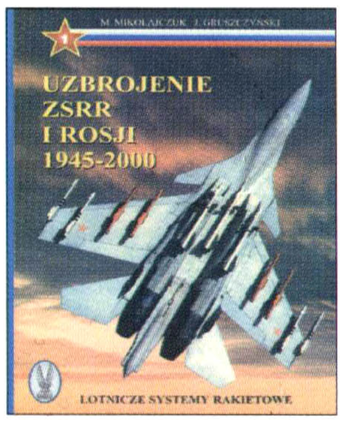


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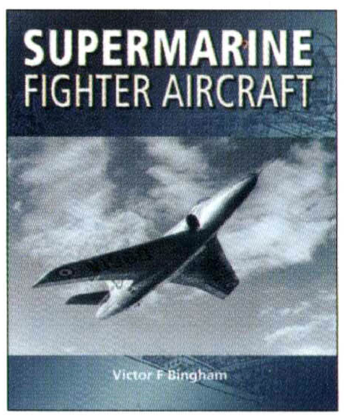
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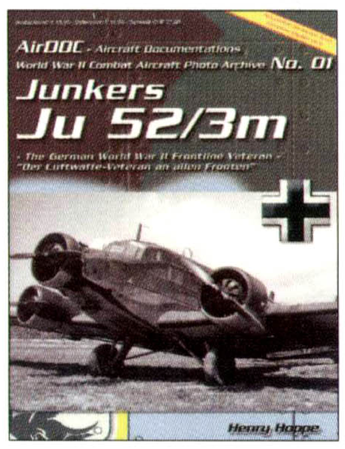
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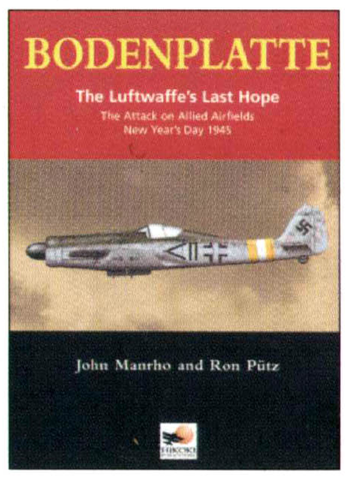
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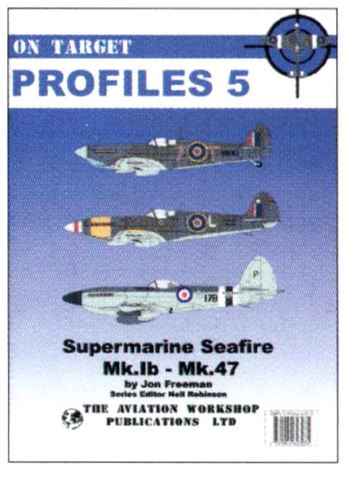
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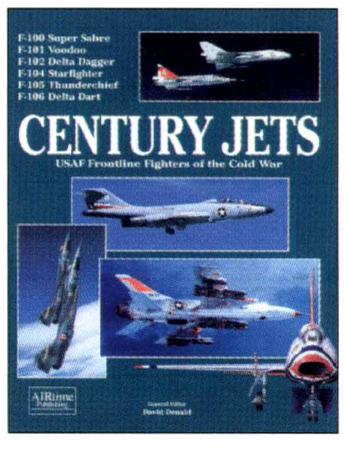
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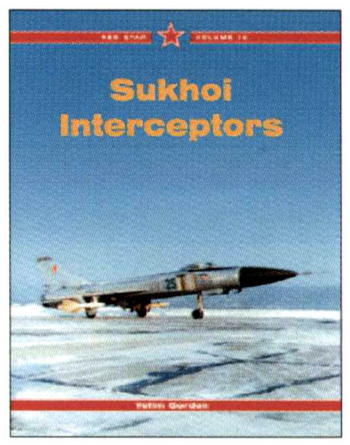
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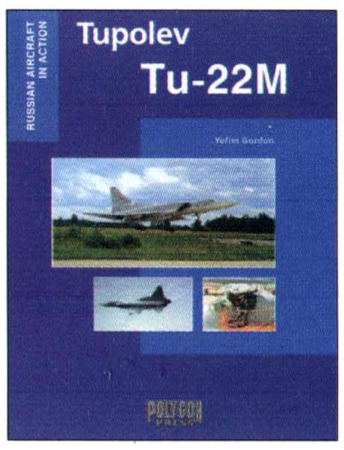
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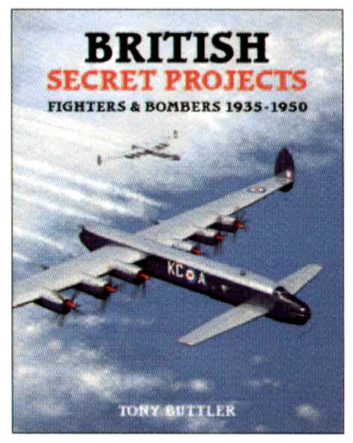
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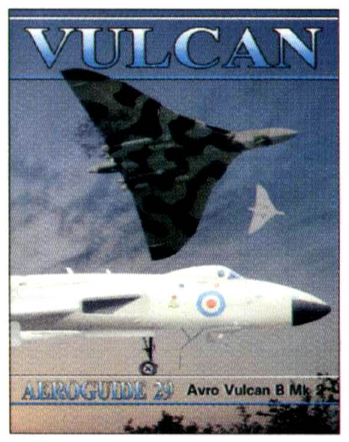
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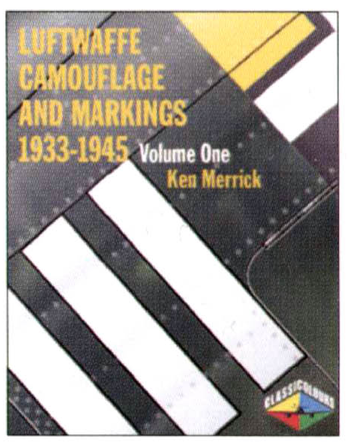
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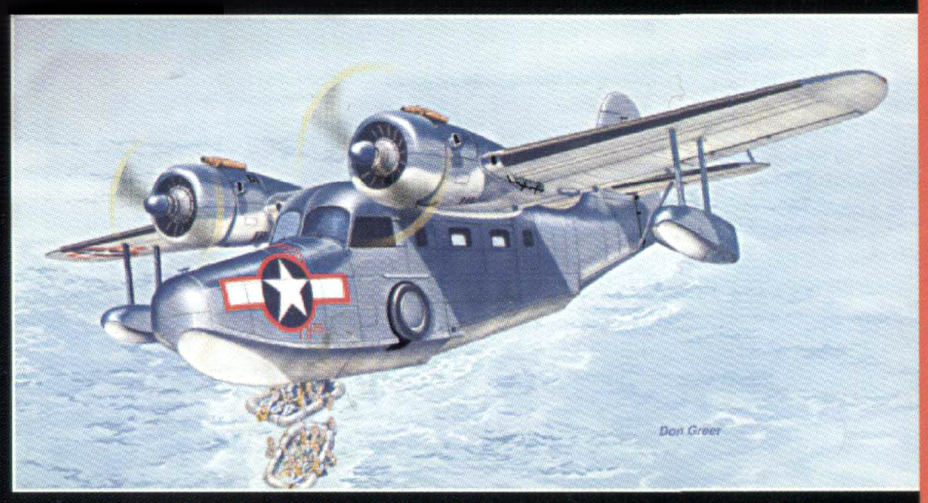
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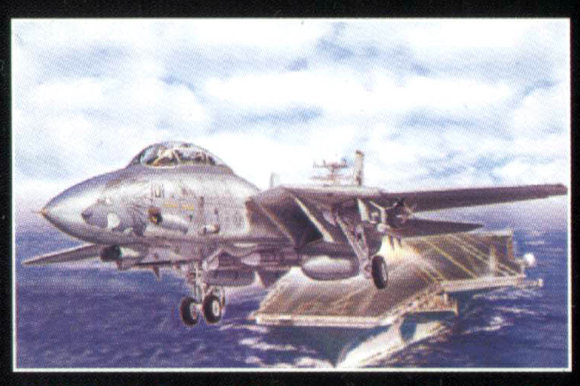
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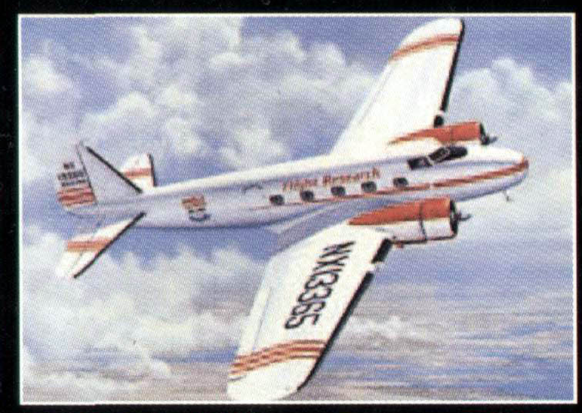
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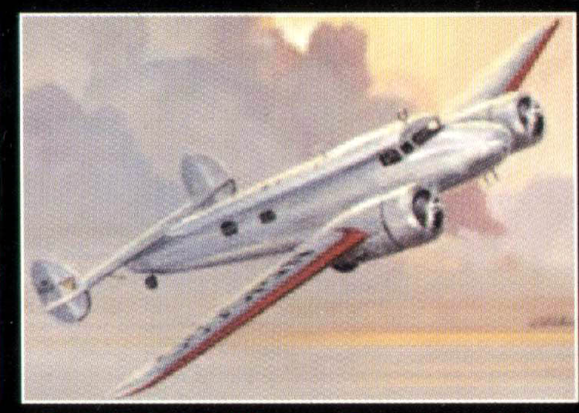
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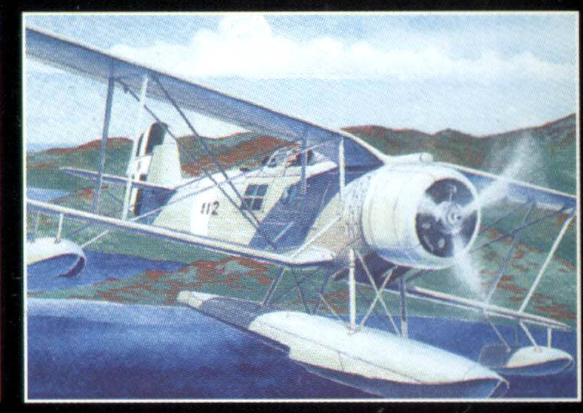
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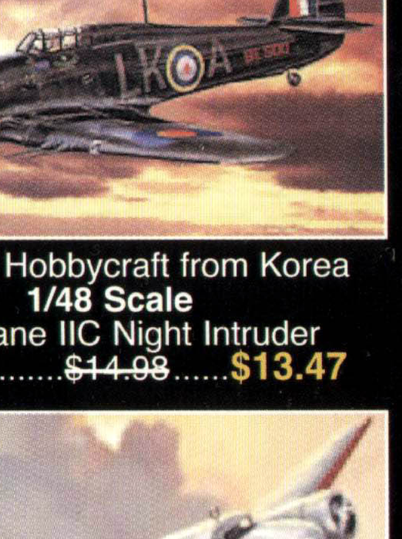
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